

Partisan Review

4

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and Others Questions of Guilt

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Is There a Science of Literature?

LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI
On Trotsky and Everything Else

ALAN SILLITOE Burton (a story)

VITEZSLAV NADEJE and PAUL NEUBURG
Inside Eastern Europe

●
... and Daniel Aaron, Michael
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NOTES

"Burton" is from **ALAN SILLITOE's** newest novel, **Raw Material**. Scribner will be bringing it out here. . . . **JONATHAN BAUMBACH's** latest novel is **What Comes Next** (Harper and Row). . . . Simon and Schuster is publishing **ROBERT JAY LIFTON's** book on antiwar veterans in March '73. . . . **LESLIE H. FARBER** was formerly Chairman of the Washington School of Psychiatry and Director of Therapy at Austen Riggs Center. Dr. Farber now practices psychoanalysis in New York. . . . **Diving into the Wreck**, **ADRIENNE RICH's** new book of poems, will be coming out in the spring from Norton. Miss Rich is at Brandeis this year. . . . **LEO BERSANI** is spending the fall as visiting professor of French at Berkeley. He is working on a study of concepts of desire and character in literature and psychoanalysis. . . . **VITEZSLAV NADEJE** is the pseudonym of a Czech dissident who played an active role in the reform movement of 1963-69. . . . **PAUL NEUBURG's** **The Hero's Children**, of which "**Generations**" is a part, will be brought out by William Morrow here and by Constable in London. . . . **RONALD SUKENICK** has recently completed a new novel, **OUT**, which Swallow will be publishing. Mr. Sukenick is working on another novel and on something called *The Endless Short Story*. . . . Professor at Warsaw University until March '68, when he was expelled for political reasons, **LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI** is now a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. . . . **JACK LUDWIG** teaches at Stony Brook. His book on the Moscow-Canadian hockey scene will be coming out soon. . . . **G. S. FRASER** tells us he's busy with John Wain, Omar Pound, and Gaitana Umen on a large-scale project for translating Islamic poetry. . . . **TONY TANNER** is a Fellow of Kings College, Cambridge. . . . Knopf is bringing out **DANIEL AARON's** study of American writers and the Civil War next year. . . . **ALAN HELMS** is at U. Mass. Boston. . . . **JANE RICHMOND** has written for the American "*That Was The Week That Was*." . . . Swallow is publishing **MICHAEL ANANIA's** new book of poems, **Riversongs**.

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THE TWO FICTIONS

Most critics have separated fiction not only from poetry but from the other arts as well. Fiction has been the almost exclusive preserve of the social-minded and the humanists, presumably because its social and human values — however stylized — are more explicit. The more formal critics have appropriated those arts, like poetry, music, painting, which seem to depend more on textual qualities, and where questions of meaning and social implication can be more easily evaded because no language for talking about them has been developed. The New Critics, for example, were locked into poetry, and when they wandered into fiction they either talked about the work as though it were a long poem, as Blackmur did with Dostoevski's *The Idiot*, or they forgot their own warnings against the heresies of interpretation, as Brooks did in *The Hidden God*.

The dual citizenship of fiction, which belongs both to the domain of form and of meaning, is one reason why discussions of avant-gardism in fiction tend to be one one-sided. The traditionalists point to the narrow range and preoccupation with form of advanced writing, while the exponents of new fiction dismiss the uninspired naturalists. The issue is of course more complex: formal advances are not always textual or linguistic, as in Joyce; they are sometimes structural, as in Dostoevski and Kafka. Even as early as Sterne the conventional narrative form and organization was broken not for verbal experiment but for ruminations that widened the range of observation. The choice is not, as it is sometimes made out, between Tolstoi and Brautigan, or Kafka and Wouk. It is a question of going beyond the dated style of many established novelists, without falling into gimmickry and empty gestures.

This is the dilemma of fiction today. Many younger writers feel that the rational and humanist tradition is dead. I think the obituary is premature, but what gives it some force is that the more inventive writers are rejecting the kind of fiction that trades on the most banal values and the false sense of order of the humanist and rationalist tradition by deflating its rhetoric and breaking up its forms. But experiment with the medium runs up against the limitations of the medium. Unlike painting or music, which are infinitely malleable, there seems to be just so much you can do with the look of the page, or the shape of the prose, or the structure of the narrative, without reducing the medium

to itself. In fact, one reason why fiction retrogressed after Joyce was that no one was able to conceive of taking the next step, as one always can in painting, for instance, where a next step is implicit in every move.

In its purest form, the sensibility of the avant-garde, which is based on plasticity and gesture, really derives from the more formal arts. And to transfer it to fiction, which resists dehumanization, means to treat ideas as forms. In this respect, Kafka is the paradigm of avant-garde fiction, particularly in his use of theme, mood, event, and idea as if they were abstract configurations. Of course, the more accepted view of fiction as a panorama of experience still persists, but it is hard to tell at this point how much is in the medium and how much comes from the conventions of reading and writing. In any case, we seem to be in a time of transition, when no one style or direction has taken hold; but there is no reason why, as in the past, the scale of innovative fiction can't be enlarged, or the traditional novel transformed, through the work of the more original writers today.

W. P.

NEW SCENE OLD SCENE

Has our history changed decisively? Have we entered upon a new epoch, with its own contours and tendencies, its own laws? Must we seek new categories to apprehend new realities? So we are told, by those who designate our culture as postmodern, our society as postindustrial, our very characters as post-Freudian. I hesitate to call our interlocutors prophets, since I suspect that many of them are aspiring priests, anxious to fill votive functions in a society which knows only the foreshortened moment.

It would be absurd to deny that profound historical changes have occurred. Once the work of the avant-garde, the modern movement in art suffuses much of our culture. Our society is surely not postindustrial in the sense that it has dispensed with technology, but the administrative and productive process has altered. Our psychic responses (and our symptoms) have changed — often to the perplexity of professional students and healers of the soul.

These developments, however, do not signify a new era. They reflect trends visible in the nineteenth century. There is a futurological bias which consists of hasty projections of a reified present. The evidence adduced by those who insist that our situation is new may well show that it is, alas, all too old. Our history still has continuity and unity, its own dreadful immanence.

Cultural modernism alternates dizzily between expressionism and estheticism. That the modern movement has served as a school for educating life itself to scandal is dubious. Life would have become scandalous in any event. Life has not imitated art, but art has anticipated life. The breaking of boundaries, the eradication of distinctions,

above all the distinction between imagination and routine, are not consequences of the acceptance of some modernist message. They come from the fragmentation and frenzy of lives, by the turning inward of a techno-bureaucratic society.

The storm rages in a setting dominated by the conflict of the new empires, and the eruption of the colonized. Within these empires (and, above all, the Western one) the new forms of industrialism are strikingly different from earlier ones. Capitalism, the mixed economies, the state socialist regimes, are each torn by conflicts over the control of production and distribution. The new relations of production oppose workers to the managerial class, however much it has changed. Why suppose that these conflicts will stabilize at their present intensity or organization? That mistake was made by the vulgar liberals and vulgar Marxists of a generation ago. To abstract, moreover, the advanced societies from their world role is not only parochial, it is, as the domestic consequences of the American Vietnam campaign show, lacking in a grasp of historical fact. The political challenge of these developments is a familiar one: what are the possibilities of a democratic politics? Many of those who insist that society has a totally altered shape suppose that a technocratic politics, if benign, is the best that we can do. Perhaps — but our present problems are derived from earlier ones, and nothing is gained by presupposing a new leap into the future. It was not in a postindustrial society that the claims of the environment were raised: the “dark satanic mills” are no recent discovery.

One thing is claimed to be new: the pervasive malaise, and its counterpart, the extraordinary protean quality of the contemporary personality. The Freudian categories no longer apply, it is said, since humans are constructed (indeed, have constructed themselves) differently. It would be surprising, however, if a social change could generate so rapid and sudden a change in character. History may have accelerated, but has it accelerated so much that a psychobiological mutation has occurred? That circumstances may favor certain kinds of sublimation, defense mechanisms, or symptoms may be true, but this does not do away with the principle of psychoanalysis. Humans still struggle with inner demons, as well as outer ones — with inner problems which accentuate and deepen historical ones. And History unfortunately supplies more evidence for the existence of *Thanatos* than the proponents of an unlimited *Eros* would allow.

New concepts can be useful; in our situation they are indispensable. The view, however, that we have entered a posthistorical epoch cannot be defended. The fruitfulness of new ideas can be judged only in intellectual (and subsequently, in political) practice. In practice, the notion that history has been transformed would be more convincing if the roots of the change were made clearer. The notion of radical discontinuity, in the meantime, is yet another road — a hidden one — to passivity. History remains the central category of the human sciences, and the idea that history breaks off every decade is fragile at best, empty at worst.

Norman Birnbaum

STORIES

Alan Sillitoe

BURTON

Grandfather Burton hated dogs. He also despised others who loved them, or even those who showed them kindness. He was blind in one eye, and that was the one he looked at animals with, unless they had hoofs or horns and so might be tempted to go for him, in which case he looked at them with the other, till he had stared them out and could afford to ignore them.

Dogs were subservient and slavish, and so were those people who called them by name, petted and patted them. Such people were also feminine and soft, and did not know why they were on earth. They had to become friendly with dogs, as if such animals could ever tell them why. Because of these blind and sweeping prejudices a large section of English humanity was cut off from him, which may have been exactly how he wanted it. If he kept dogs, it was only because they had their uses, but they got little thanks for it.

He was hard on human nature because it was hard on him. At the same time it must be said that he did not totally lack it. Women who were close to him, and those members of his own family, feared and loathed him. Yet women who did not know his true side (if there was such a thing) were attracted by a certain distance he put between them, and occasionally fell in love across the gap of it, a space well-seasoned by his wry and bawdy sense of humour when it wasn't filled by a dignified, and possibly defensive, silence.

In his prime and heyday he was over six feet tall, and extremely strong. There was no fat on him, and not much muscle, either, but

he could bend an iron bar, and twist steel—in which case he might not have been as unfeeling as many people accused him of being. Nevertheless, he was irascible and unpredictable, as unbending to others as he was rigorous with himself.

He was born in 1868, and his power came out of the strength of the working arm. It enabled him to provide bread and shelter for his family, when lack of labor and effort meant starvation or the workhouse. He swore that everyone but he was idle. Everyone but he was, in his favorite phrase, “as soft as shit.” But while his wife and eight children were said to hate and fear him he was respected by others because he was a good blacksmith, winning many prizes in Nottinghamshire and neighboring counties as a first-class farrier. He had a showcase full of exhibition horseshoes in his kitchen, and I have one of them on my desk as I write. He was said to have such a steady hand and eye that he could even shoe “Old Nick’s nag so that all four hoofs would come back complete out of Hell.” Known in the trade as a careful worker, his forge and workshop were kept absolutely neat and tidy, since he was a man who always had to know exactly where everything was, something his own father had instilled into him as a youth, but which continually made tension when he applied this rule to his house.

Burton kept pigs, poultry and pigeons, and dug a good garden of vegetables. Every Friday night when he came home from work he labored with a great iron shit-bucket from the outhouse opposite the kitchen door and carried it behind the cottage, up to the end of the garden for fertilizer. He had a gun and could shoot well, in spite of one eye being dead.

I knew him well, for he was only sixty when I was born. The memories I’ve kept have thrived on all else I’ve heard about him. But even his children are getting to be old men and women, and his grandchildren are middle aged. He loved his children, until they began to grow up and show what they were made of, revealing traits they had inherited from something over which he had no control. If they came from him, he put them down with more than necessary harshness. Apart from this he became a terror to them because his initial love had made them timid, and he couldn’t stand any soul that was timid.

His daughters fared badly because he expected them to follow

the same pattern he had forced on his wife — whom he had long since broken in, but who still loved him as well as feared him. His sons did no better in that he expected the same standards from them that he had lived by himself, though setting them for his sons was one way of not having to live by them as thoroughly as others were expected to, since they were doing it for him.

His three sons, who also became qualified farriers, had to saw logs on the horse by the pigsty and chop them into sticks, fetch buckets of water with a yoke from the well up the slope behind the garden three hundred yards away, feed the pigs and clean out the sty. They didn't take well to this, though the only form of rebellion open to them was a stubborn sort of idleness when work-orders fell too thick and fast.

On Sunday morning the brass candlesticks and ornaments were taken from the fireplace shelf and, together with the horseshoes that were unhooked from inside the cabinet, spread over the table and polished by Ivy and Emily, his two daughters still with the family. Polishing the brasses and the table "silver" was made into a ritual because it had to be done. Ritual was easier than just plain work. The house was kept up to a good standard for Burton, and in that sense for the family as well, though one felt that they would have felt happier doing it if he had been a little less tyrannical.

But he was a blacksmith, and all visible metal had to shine and look presentable, had to be worshipped by polish and work. Whenever his married daughters came to the house he would not let them help in this. Neither could the men do it. It was a job solely for the unmarried girls.

Burton believed that, since he worked, everybody should work. He was the one who set me working as a child, whereas my own father had not been able to succeed in it. It offended the sight of Burton's good eye to see anyone idle, even a child, so that from being a spectator of his own labor in the garden, I was soon hauling a barrow, weeding, digging, getting in coal or chopping wood, cleaning out the pigeon coops or running errands.

Work was a virtue, the only one. Even the straight way he stood when he wasn't working proclaimed it. And while the better half of me agreed with him, it must have been the other half that led me to become a writer.

Burton had no time for the waywardness and irresponsibility of youth, as if he had never had any himself. One of his sons, who worked with him when he was grown up as a blacksmith down the pit, would receive an occasional hard thump if he seemed to be slacking on the job, or if some piece of work wasn't up to a good fit or a high polish.

Maybe he was jealous of youth, or bitter about the fact that he had already lost it. Memory was a function which he kept to himself, and so to all others it seemed as if he had none, either for good things or bad. He never mentioned his father or his mother, or talked about the "good old days." Speech, like sweat, was valuable. Perhaps he really had forgotten his youth by the time he had gone forty. He appeared older to his sons than their friends' fathers, though he was the same age, and looked just as young and vigorous. But he was less approachable in a human and fatherly manner, and if Burton did remember his own youth it was only so that he could put the experience of it to such good use that his own children stood little chance of enjoying it in his presence. Everyone agreed that his cunning was formidable.

Since Burton never talked about his own father no one ever got any inkling of what he was like. He died before my mother was born, so she couldn't tell me what sort of a person he was. Perhaps he was more humane than Burton, who might have modeled himself on one of his grandfathers. But if this was so, and who it was, I shall never know, for if your spade tries to dig too far back it only swings freely in the air.

When Burton wasn't present his sons and daughters always referred to him by his surname, never "Father" or "Ernest" — as if he were a fierce stranger who had been put in charge of them by some malevolent authority. It is possible that he didn't model himself on anyone in particular, but simply emerged from the knotted roots of his past, and was finished off by his own self-centered inviolable opinion of himself, like any person of great strength or extreme weakness.

Unlike many men of the present century he had never been in the army. He abominated such an institution, and thought that anyone who joined or allowed himself to be ensnared into it was even lower than a dog. He never felt threatened by any foreign

power or alien system, and he'd not protect any government which felt itself in danger or told him that he was in danger too. He owned no property, and lived by his labor and skill, so saw very little connection between government and people. When his eldest son Oliver enlisted during the Great War he only forgave him because he was killed, for even Burton was not so inhuman that he could hate the dead.

Until quite late in life he never worked for a boss, having been trained as a blacksmith by his father so that he inherited the forge at Lenton. It was situated on a lane running beside the railway from Derby Road to Old Church Street. I remember passing it as a child, by which time Burton had given it up for lack of customers, and gone to work at Wollaton Pit. The motor car came in during his lifetime, though I never heard him complain that it had ruined his trade.

I walked by the old forge one day with my sister, on one of our long treks to the shores of the Trent in summer. It was locked up, and the building itself, which seemed no more than a shed, looked as if it would soon fall down — though someone had put a good strong lock on the rotten door to make sure no vandals went in and helped it to collapse over them.

At the end of the lane, before winding back onto Gregory Street, was a fieldgun from the horse artillery, set on a concrete exhibition platform beyond some railings and surrounded by beds of flowers. This satanic memo from the Great War that had finished twenty years before stood in front of some almshouses erected for the widows of heroes whom the world was fit for, but who perished in the war to end wars. It was the badge of what had warped the women's lives, and they could dwell on that machine from their bedroom or parlor windows, and maybe reflect that it was a similar gun on the German side that had blown up their husbands.

Explosives were the most efficient killer of the Great War, according to the mad and fascinating statistics of the official histories. While forty percent of the casualties were caused by bullets, sixty percent were killed or mangled by artillery. That gun I stared at as a child made the air raw for me around those almshouses. I couldn't resist pressing my face against the cold railings and staring for several minutes at its grisly and intricate mechanisms, planted there with such macabre sentiments. But I never saw a woman

looking from a window of the building itself, nor going into any of the doors. The place always seemed decorously deserted. On Armistice Day the gun would be surrounded by wreaths of Flanders poppies.

Burton's daughter Edith had married a gunner in the Great War, and he had been killed, after leaving her with one child. But she didn't live at these almshouses because she then married another gunner who, unfortunately, had survived the war, because no man could have been worse to her than he was. The savagery that he brought home with him from the mud of the Ypres Salient (but which no doubt had been fed on much that was there before) was execrated even by Burton, who was respectable and civilized by comparison.

The man's name was also Ernest, but he was known to everyone as Blonk, a mysterious label put onto him by his childhood friends from Radford Woodhouse, and which lasted him till the day of his death. He was a demon with boots and fists, and he used both on his wife, together with the blackest bad language he could muster. He worked alternately as a bricklayers' laborer and a coal miner, changing jobs when the mood took him, and indulging his craze for playing football whenever a spell of unemployment came between. The expression of his face was tough and cunning, and he had a head of springy and grizzled hair. When Burton told Edith, just before she married Blonk, that he was no good and would be sure to lead her a dance, she simply thought he was trying to keep her under his thumb as he had always done, and so ignored his warning.

Wayward Edith had already been a few years in service, and wouldn't listen to her father. In fact the three of Burton's girls who married young were wayward, and were not entirely made that way by his bullying. It is said that wayward girls never get good husbands — whatever a good husband might be. They are never satisfied, in any case, being too mettlesome either to get a good husband, or to be content with a bad one. Perhaps they deserved neither, and should never have married at all. But they did because many men found them attractive, that flighty trio of blacksmith's daughters, and they sooner or later succumbed to marriage in order to get out of Burton's clutches.

But a hard time was had by husbands and wives alike, though all three women are now alive, and all three husbands are dead. Yet Edith, who was one of the best, undoubtedly got the worst.

Burton's early and inevitable confrontation with Blonk resulted in Edith and her subsequent eight children being more or less cut off from her parents. It was a ban that Burton put on her husband more than his daughter, for whenever better-off members of the family from Leeds or St. Neots (having heard of her plight) brought clothes for the children, Burton always saw that she got them. As far as I could make out she seemed to be his favorite daughter, probably because she was the most high-spirited and independent of them in getting away from him sooner than any of the others, and because she eventually had a fiercer struggle than the rest, never letting any man tame or break her, nor allowing circumstances to dull her heart.

In any case Burton often did have a kind enough word for those of her children he met in the fields around Engine Town, and his wife never turned them empty-handed from her door, though they were often afraid to go there for fear of meeting Burton, who could be harsh enough to them if he was in a bad mood.

Edith was my favorite aunt. She was tall, had reddish hair, blue eyes, and a well-formed body. Why she appeared more profoundly connected to me than anyone else I don't know, but throughout my childhood she had a great knack of organizing food for her eight children, and whenever I was near her house at mealtimes — which was often — there was always the chance of getting some of it. She never complained at seeing me queue up with the rest, though there was little enough to go round.

When I was five weeks old a malfunctioning of the heart got me in its grip. My face and body turned blue, and I seemed to be at the point of death. My mother was also ill, and though it was early April, snow was falling and lay thick on the ground. Edith wrapped me in a shawl, put on her coat, and set off with me across the open quarter-mile stretch of the park to get me to the doctor's place beyond, not knowing — she told me later — whether I would be dead or alive when she opened the shawl in his surgery.

A few years later she and my mother got hold of tickets for an organ recital at the Albert Hall in Nottingham. They took me with

them, telling me we were going to hear some thunder and lightning. We stayed half an hour at the concert, and then left — my first experience of listening to Bach.

Burton was not much interested in politics, though he did vote from time to time at General Elections. In the 1890's he supported the successful Liberal candidate for the West Nottingham constituency, a Mr. J. Yoxall, who stood on a platform of House of Lords reform, rural education, and industrial insurance. Later in his life Burton voted Labour. He did not believe however that politics could have much effect on his life. It was as if he had been born before the age of politics, knowing that they could alter nothing, yet wanting to believe that they could. While there were horses in the world he was his own master, and no system could change that. At least it did not for most of his life.

Burton was never patriotic. He saw me once with a Union Jack flag that had been given out at school, and told me to throw the bloody thing away. He was too proud and too sure of himself, too skilled in his job. You were soft in the head and the backbone if you were for queen and country, or for king and country. To believe in that sort of thing was a form of bum-sucking. You'd got no guts, you were frightened of the dark. He couldn't understand such people, and so left them alone. As a man you had your work, and your family. The country you lived in, in the form of its government, was always threatening these with destruction, so how could you be patriotic about it?

He was a man of few friends — though everybody in the district knew him. It wasn't as if they were afraid of him, or distrusted him exactly, but they recognized him as the smith, the man apart, a person with secrets that they could never share. It was as if he had come to the country from some strange place hundreds of years ago, and that he had forgotten he had done so, or even where it was that he had come from, but that look in his eyes as he gazed at the woods in the distance, was as empty and farseeing as if some part of him did after all remember that he had undergone some tremendous and difficult migration. He worked much, and talked little, so perhaps that accounted for him having more acquaintances than friends.

The only foreigners he ever met were a couple of Belgian refugees billeted on them during the Great War, and his one observation was that they were a “rum pair” — though he never said as much to their faces. His wife, Mary-Ann, remarked that they had to have chocolate to drink instead of tea, which seemed extremely strange to her.

Burton had no belief in God. And after death it was the end, nothing, a disaster you went to sleep under before it hit you, if you were lucky. Nevertheless, all his children were packed off to Sunday School for nearly ten years of their lives, the result of which was a glass-fronted case of books in the parlor recess, sober volumes they had brought home as prizes, and the first such collection I’d seen in a private house. Burton had never as much as glanced at any of them, because he could neither read nor write — though he could sign his own name.

Another plain result of bundling the elder kids off to Bible class every Sunday was the birth of more children, for I’m sure that, like many other people, Burton only sent them there so that he could get them out of the house and then make free with his wife without inquisitive kids wondering what they were up to and what those noises were. If the Sunday Schools of England in all their pertinent and Godly work did not exactly produce a nation of Christians they at least helped in the days when living-space was even more cramped than it is today to keep a bit of private love life on the go. One wonders if those sanctimonious well-meaning men and women really knew what they were up to, or whether they didn’t just look upon Sunday School teaching as a sure-fire way of keeping themselves out of mischief.

Even in their sixties Burton and Mary-Ann, when I used to stay there, still went upstairs on a Sunday afternoon “for a bit of a sleep” as they put it. Burton would try and get me to go to Sunday School with the Ollington children from across the Cherry Orchard, but I wouldn’t do it, coming right out with the statement that I did not believe in God, a straight answer which amused him so much that he winked at Mary-Ann, laughed loudly, and didn’t mention it again. He either recognized me in him, or gave in to the unknown part of me that stemmed from my father and that he implacably disliked — though he never said so.

I was treated well by him because apart from being willing and able to labor physically, I also bothered myself industriously with books and writing paper. I sat on a chair in the kitchen, by the light of an oil lamp shining from its hook above the table, reading or drawing maps, and I know that he looked at me strongly from time to time because he had not seen the like of it before. Sometimes he passed me the newspaper, and asked me to read him the latest news from Abyssinia, where "that swine Mussolini was knocking people about."

When I came in on Sunday afternoon from playing in the garden, or along the lane outside, Mary-Ann and Emily would already be laying the tea table—and waiting for that peculiar authoritative stump of Burton as he came downstairs in his stockinged feet.

If he saw the cat in front of the fire he would kick it away—though it was often alert and leapt out of sight before he came into the room. If the dog stayed there, being near enough human to hope for better things, he would usually move that away also. But if Burton was in an affectionate mood he would sometimes grip the dog around its long mouth and hold the jaws fast, an action which, as well as being painful, induced in the animal a feeling of claustrophobia and panic, so that it struggled to get free, much to Burton's delight, whined and wriggled, until, to the loud protests of his wife and daughters, he let it go with as friendly a pat as he could muster under the thwarting circumstances. This pat was the nearest I ever saw him get to an expression of guilt.

And so he came in to his tea, having taken special care, it seemed, to reestablish his reputation as a "rotten old bogger" in front of his family, so that normal life could be resumed once more. There would be salmon and cucumber and jam-pasty to eat, but he never had much of it, not being a big eater, in spite of his work. He would put on his boots, and be off into the yard or garden, to busy himself for an hour or so before walking off for his evening bout at some pub or other.

In his own world he was without fear, and he despised anyone who was not the same, though he might occasionally condescend to talk to them for reasons of work or business. Those who were similar in stature to himself might be lucky to get a passing nod

from time to time. Such people, if they had as much pride and bite about them as Burton, could have thought him somewhat unjustified at being so aloof, though I don't suppose they'd ever give much indication of it.

He always lived close to Nottingham, a lifetime spent within a few miles of the Goose Fair and Market Place. He was born and bred and married and buried at Lenton, but also lived at Bridge Yard, and later at a block of three cottages beyond Radford Woodhouse known for some reason as "Engine Town" — though it is marked on Ordnance Survey maps of 1860 as "Old Engine Houses." They were demolished in 1939, a few months after water taps and electricity had been put in, to make way for the spread of new houses from Nottingham.

The cottages were connected by a motorable high-hedged lane to Radford Woodhouse, a compact settlement of four streets, beyond which one went by paved roads to Nottingham. But to other localities there were only footpaths and tracks across the fields. To reach Aspley or Basford one went up Colliers' Pad, a leafy and narrow bridlepath that ran along the edge of Cherry Orchard (an open space of undulating scrubland), a path which was often used by miners going home from Radford or Wollaton Pits.

Burton never thought of himself as a city man, even when his house was on the actual town boundary and he could find himself in Nottingham simply by walking to the end of the yard. There were still many fields to cross before coming to the packed houses of Old Radford and the first lively outlying pubs of the city.

On Saturday night he dressed in his best suit. In fact he had two, which seemed an unparalleled luxury compared to the state of my own father at the time. There was a black one and a brown one, with boots to match each, and in one of these he'd make his way down the dry or muddy lane, according to season, and under the long tunnel-like railway bridge, stopping at the beer-off in Radford Woodhouse for a pint, then going on by the disused lime kilns up to Wollaton Road, which would take him the two-mile walk into Nottingham.

As a child I once caught a glimpse of him in a pub when someone going in opened the saloon bar door. Burton was drinking standing up, talking to other men, the upper half of his tankard-arm

held well into his side, the beer pot straight at his mouth when he drank, though the stance and picture was by no means a stiff one. Then I dodged out of sight in case he should see me.

He drank as much beer as the colliers, and on leaving Wollaton pit every day, where he worked underground as a blacksmith, he stopped at the Admiral Rodney in the village for his customary few pints. At Sunday dinner a quart bottle would be set on the table, which only he was allowed to drink. If his three grown-up sons wanted to drink at the same meal they had to go off and buy a pint of their own, though they could only bring a glass to the table, never the actual bottle. If they did there would be ructions, which would end in them getting knocked down — if they didn't take it away.

Later in life, when he was just above sixty, he used to send me out on Sunday morning to the Woodhouse for his ale, and I remember the smell of it as the young woman at the beer-off poured it into the funnel she held over the bottle. He once gave me half a glass when I got back, and was delighted when I staggered away from the meal half drunk. On another occasion he gave me a pinch of snuff, which set me sneezing around the house and yard for hours. I was one of the few who appreciated his sense of humor, though he was universally known among his family as a rotter, and a "mean old swine," mostly because all his actions added up to the fact that he liked making people dance to his tune.

His eldest son, Oliver, had a girl friend when he was twenty, and Burton who was forty-five took a fancy to her. Much to the despair of his son she also fancied him, being a loose and saucy Woodhouse tart — according to other views. The iron peace of the family was shattered when Burton went off with her for a few days. Oliver, who was a qualified blacksmith, went into the army because the Great War was on.

A few months later he was dead, not at the Battle of the Aisne, nor in the slaughter at Loos, but on a moor in Norfolk. Some of his boisterous soldier-mates had, by way of a joke, fed rum to a string of mules that Oliver was to lead across the moor at dusk. Enlivened too much, they kicked him to death, and he wasn't found till the middle of the following day.

His body was brought back to Nottingham, and buried in Lenton churchyard. He was that rare youth who is liked by all his sisters, and as a child I used to go with them — my aunts — to put flowers on his grave. They did so every week, even twenty or thirty years after he had died. He was also Burton's favorite son, and Burton himself was eventually buried next to him. The last time Burton went out of the house as an old man of nearly eighty, before his first and last illness which brought on death, was to visit Oliver's grave and set flowers by it. Unlike his wife and daughters he would never put them in a vase of water, but merely lay them on the grave itself, stay a moment or two, grunt, and walk away. Burton did not believe in God, but his family, at both times equally grief-stricken, said that God had got back at him twice: once when He put out his eye, and again when He took his son.

When Burton was working as a young man, a piece of burning steel flew into his eye, and, eye surgery being what it was at the end of the nineteenth century — at least for someone like Burton — it stayed there for the rest of his life, and went to the grave with him. He lived most of his days, the fifty years that remained, in appalling pain, which almost certainly accounted for much of his harshness and short temper.

Burton was certainly no hero. If he had been he'd maybe have kept a stiff upper lip and been as light and jolly as the rest of his family wanted him to be. Or at least he would have said nothing sharp to them and let them live their own lives. But he believed in spreading his suffering, and whether they liked it or not they had to share it with him, while at the same time never mentioning the cause of it, or hearing it from his own lips either. There weren't many heroes in those days.

He used to sit without a murmur in a darkened room when he could bear his affliction no longer, a bottle of whisky at his side. This suffering was compounded when he had his dead son to think about as well. Even when he was over seventy I remember being told not to go into the parlor, because he wanted to be by himself.

His family also said that Burton was not capable of loving anybody, that he had never loved anyone and never would. But to me he seemed tender to his wife, and calm enough when I knew him and they were elderly. When they went out together he made Mary-

Ann walk some paces behind him, and this caused much comment, though he never altered in his habit.

In the prime of their married life he gave her as little money as possible to keep a house of ten. When they lived at Bridge Yard, a house on Wollaton Road by the canal, between a coal-loading wharf and the school, she took in washing to try and make ends meet. All her complaints made no difference to him. He seemed impenetrable, and couldn't even understand that he was being unkind. She had to have money for the house, but he had to have money for beer, without which he could neither live nor work.

The children said he took more care over feeding his pigs than he did over them. When people came with buckets of slops and crusts to the house for his pigs he would give them a penny or two, then hand the buckets to his children so that they could carry them to the sty. On the way there they would search for leftovers still fit to eat, but he never knew about this, otherwise they would have got a good hiding for robbing their own father. And nobody would ever tell him to his face that his children were hungry.

He worked unbelievably hard. Blacksmithery was a trade that demanded it, in which it was said that some smiths occasionally went blind from the spirit-breaking labor of their work. Yet for all that, Burton appeared to me to be a sensitive man. Perhaps as a child, and a grandchild at that, I was able to get through to a part of him that had never been opened to his own children. His one good eye seemed to be extraordinarily alive, and to miss nothing. His mouth was permanently ironic, turning down at each end but as if it didn't really want to, a wicked mouth ready to play any trick, or to see one done.

Every face has a permanent expression which is not only based on the formation of the features themselves, but is also moulded by the qualities of the inner soul. It was stamped there at some moment of truth, which may have been at the point of conception, when the two expressions on the parents' faces fused into that of the conceived soul. This was modified at the child's shock on coming out of the womb and into air; and further altered by the environmental pounding of its first few years. A person can never let go of this external picture — by which the inner soul is recognizable to the perceptive observer — and Burton was too sure of himself ever to think

of escaping from his. He simply dug deeper and deeper into it, and stayed that way.

In spite of this necessary but unthinking loyalty to his own identity, much of it maintained at the expense of others, Burton's children ended up diffident and civilized, good-natured and with a sense of humor, which was probably due more to the benign influence of Mary-Ann than the stern eye and often hard fist of Burton. The most consistent charge leveled against him was that he was an "interfering old bogger." Whatever was going on in house and family he would comment on, usually in a derogatory fashion, poking his nose into things with such dominant advice that he was known only as a bully by his grown-up children.

Only one daughter he was not allowed to bully as a child, one who was a little backward until later in life. She was the daughter whom Mary-Ann loved most, in that she never left her alone for a moment, but as a child took her everywhere so that no more harm would come to her. She grew up in fear of Burton nevertheless, but with no thought of resentment or rebellion like the others. She did not become mentally ill, and was able all her life to earn her living and maintain a certain humor against the world.

She got involved with the church, but only after Burton had died, for while he lived he either paralyzed them, or damned them by his nagging. Two of his daughters never married while he was alive, and they blamed this on him. Being the sort of man he was, his daughters fared worse in life than his sons. Those three daughters who married hard and impossible men met no peace until each of their husbands were dead.

"Burton" is an old gypsy or didacoi name, though I never heard it said that he actually came from such people. Still, he did have a way with horses and women. He also smoked, drank, and filled himself with fat, and died at nearly eighty with never an illness in his life. The three remedies he occasionally used to keep himself in sorts were Friars Balsam, Fullers Earth, and Epsom Salts. He smoked Robin cigarettes, or Park Drive, though often he sat at the parlor table making his own. He was a good customer of Shipstones Ales.

He has gone now, and nobody knows where to, though some

said there was only one place for a man like him, and it wasn't in Heaven. He's vanished, but not exactly without trace, for he still has five surviving daughters, one son, and thirteen grandchildren. Since I can't light candles for him, I write words, and though he may have been a real bastard (and undoubtedly was, from all I've heard) he was my grandfather on my mother's side.

I recently saw him in a dream. I was in it, too, and we were inside a large wooden barnlike building somewhere in the countryside. I found a piece of new wood which it seemed I had just split from a bannister rail. I had twisted it off as if by some gigantic force. It was satisfying to pick at its fresh-splintered surface, though this required much strength from my fingers. I showed it to Burton: "You see how vigorous and alive the wood is?"

"Yes," he answered, "but it's rotten. Look at it."

And staring close I saw that, just under the surface of the wood, it was pullulating with tiny winged insects and maggots. "Well," I told him, "David will be able to examine them under his microscope. I've just bought him a new one."

David is my son, and one of his great grandfathers was a cantor in a synagogue in Bukovina. Burton's face was smiling at the sight of David coming toward us.

The main person in a dream is always oneself, no matter who it is. David was me as a child in this dream, and also himself as he is now.

It is a pity that one can't have one's grandparents all one's life — though if this were so one wouldn't then have them to look back on, and childhood would not have been what it was. But of all those now dead of my family, Burton is the one whom I would like to know that I had become a writer, the one I would like to read my novels and stories to.

And yet I want to stop writing solely about Burton because I do not want in any way to become him or even like him. As it is, I feel myself being partly encapsulated by his spirit. He was too real a person for me, and since I am not writing a novel I have to be careful and pull away from him. If I were writing a novel I would have to become him in order to write about him. That would be possible, and necessary, and I would feel entirely easy in it, because in writing a novel I would feel no danger whatsoever of staying like

him. One's grandparents are more important in every way than one's parents.

As an old man of nearly eighty Burton went to visit one of his married daughters in Kent. It couldn't have been too long before he went back to Nottingham and died, though there was no sign of it until very close to the end. One day in Kent he stood with another of his grandsons watching men cutting the wheat, and when the field was small some bystanders began throwing missiles at the rabbits that started to run for safety. Burton saw one in the chaff within hand's reach, and made a grab for it. At that moment a piece of slate smashed into the back of his hand, inadvertently thrown by someone who did not see him.

Burton did not make any complaint, because he had kept his grip on the rabbit, which he hit at the back of the neck and killed. He stood up and said nothing, but walked off with his grandson to the doctor's house a few miles away to get his hand put right, blood trailing on the ground from his shattered veins, the dead rabbit swinging from his pocket.

Jonathan Baumbach

DROOL

There is at the moment a baby with bowlegs standing on my lap. *Quel chance!* He has been in the same position for hours, tilted forward like a figurehead. It is what he likes to do and I am not, though my knees begin to ache, unappreciative of the honor. "Don't you have anything else to do?" I ask him. The question slides by him like a greased pig. I was meditating when he arrived, trying to come to terms with feelings of failure and emptiness, and have lost concentration, have fallen into vagueness. Why don't I lift him off my lap and return him to the floor? It hurts his feelings. And he is tenacious and will, if removed, find his way back.

Mostly, he just stands there, flexing his knees a bit, looking ahead. He is no trouble, not much, a good boy, self-sufficient and forward-looking. I suggest that he go to the corner and see how the weather bodes. He turns his head to see if I mean what I say, a pained quizzical look on his face.

Nothing frets as much the spirit in my business (meditating) as time wasting. I haven't thought a thought worth thinking since he climbed on my lap.

Look, I say in desperation, I enjoy having you on my lap but I need a little time by myself and perhaps you would like some time by yourself. He takes the hint and climbs down. "Bye bye," he says wistfully. Two minutes later he is back.

I am in the early middle of a thought when he returns to my lap, so I ignore him briefly which is what he is used to. He digs his heels in as if getting ready for a long siege. "Wipe my drool," he says, "and I'll tell you a story." It is the most words in sequential order I have heard him speak. I pretend not to be astounded so as not to upset his equilibrium, wipe his drool with a yellowing handkerchief.

For an infant, he tells an excellent story. I won't recapitulate it all for you here, but will try to limit myself to the high points. The central figure, not unexpectedly, is a baby.

The storyteller apologizes for his choice of hero. His choice is limited, he explains, by his tender years.

At the start the baby says good-bye to his father and goes out into the world, seeking adventure. The father pleads with him to stay another year, at least until he is toilet trained, but the baby is impatient. Why postpone living? The father holds philosophically that a child should be free to make his own mistakes.

THE BABY'S ADVENTURES (a sampling)

A woman, hanging out clothes in her front yard, invites the baby in for soup. Another time, the baby says. The woman says the soup will get cold if the baby doesn't drink it and will not accept refusal. It is a thick, nearly impenetrable pea soup the woman has to offer which in truth is not the baby's favorite. To be polite he has one spoonful on which he gags through no fault of his own. Throwing the bowl off the table, he gets up to go. The woman, almost as wide as

she is tall, imposes herself in the doorway. You can't leave, she screams, until you finish your soup.

Meanwhile, a woodcutter chancing through the neighborhood hears the woman's screams.

"What's the trouble, madam?" he asks, breaking down the door with his axe.

"This baby," the woman says, pointing, "has just been horrible and won't finish his soup."

The woodman, moved by the lady's tale, raises his axe over the baby's head as if to split him in half.

"I beg of you, woodman," says the lady, "spare that baby's life." She throws herself on her knees and weeps on the woodcutter's shoes, which makes it slippery for him. "Please. Please. Please."

The woodcutter is a simple man, he says, unused to pleas of mercy. Once his axe is raised it is harder to withdraw than to strike the necessary blow.

The lady offers her hand in marriage to the woodman in exchange for the life of the child. The woodman says he will think about the lady's offer and return in one day with his decision.

"Are you grateful?" the lady asks the baby when the woodcutter is gone. She kisses his face a hundred times. The baby says that he'd like to continue his journey.

"All I want is a little show of gratitude," the lady says, weeping at the humiliation of her position, "and then, all things being equal, you can go."

The baby shows gratitude — he will do anything for his freedom — at which time the lady reneges on her promise. What good is gratitude, she asks herself, without the continuing presence of him who is grateful. She proposes to put the baby's gratitude on display in the kitchen window so that the casual passerby can see what kind of woman she is.

The baby takes back his gratitude; the lady screams; the woodman returns with his axe, making a striking appearance.

"I've brought you my decision," the woodman says. Baby doesn't wait to find out what it is but runs through the woodman's legs and out the door and out into the street. He will not be persuaded, he thinks, to stop for another bowl of soup. Then he thinks what will happen to the lady in his absence. She will bawl her heart out, no question, the poor lady. One day he will return with an axe of his own and make her proud.

In the course of his travels, the baby falls into despair, and missing the people he has left behind, considers aborting his journey. People are either the same everywhere, he decides, or not the same anywhere, merely seem the same to one whose eyes are inexperienced with distinctness.

There are certain functions the baby requires others to do for him, which cuts into his independence of action. His diaper, for example. He scours the city for someone who will change his diaper without asking in return an excess of gratitude.

He leaves a notice in the Personals column of an underground newspaper. "Groovy baby, Capricorn, interested in meaning of life, seeks mature couple for intimate exchange."

A gray-haired woman, a former mother, says that there is nothing in the world she would rather do than change a baby's diaper. Her husband adds, "My wife's an angel when it comes to children. She spoils them silly."

The baby put himself in her hands. She is a bit clumsy from being out of practice, but there are certain things, as she says, that you never forget. When she pins the diaper to his flesh he lets out a howl which causes several fire trucks to come rushing in their direction. Done (the mistake corrected), she hugs him and says, "You poor baby, did you mum and dad desert you, sweetheart." She hugs him breathless.

When she releases him, the husband unplugs the baby's thumb from his mouth. "Now you look like a big boy," he says.

When he is by himself again the baby returns thumb to mouth.

The mature couple insist on buying the baby a gift, something useful yet out of the ordinary, to remember them by. "What do you need, sweetheart?" the woman asks the baby. "Give us some idea what you want."

"A cookie would be nice," says the baby.

"Babies never know what they want," the husband says. "You give them something and then they want it. Sometimes they don't want it just because you give it to them."

After long discussion, the couple decide on buying the baby a giant piggy bank to teach him the value of savings. The husband removes the baby's thumb from his mouth. "With a bank like that you don't need to suck your thumb." The baby goes off without the piggy bank — it is too heavy to carry — and the police are called, the couple heartbroken.

"All we want, officer, is to give this baby this token of our affection. After that you can do what you want with the young fellow."

"Who does this baby belong to?" asks the officer.

The streets of the city are filled with people who have no answer to the policeman's question. "If he belongs to no one, we'll have to run him in." There are a few who laugh; others go about their business buying Christmas presents or not buying them.

The piggy bank and baby are taken to the station for questioning. The mature man and woman come along as material witnesses.

Someone is guilty, the chief of police says. The diaper the lady

changed is brought in on the end of a long stick as evidence. The odor, says the chief, does violence to the air. Everyone in turn has a sniff before the diaper is sent to the lab for testing.

The husband and wife turn out to be undercover police, revealing themselves in a startlingly personal moment. Though we love him, they say, he's been a handful.

The police ask the baby a number of difficult questions. "Where do you live, baby?" "Where did the stuff come from?" "Who put you up to it?" They give him a lollipop to loosen his tongue and take turns saying kitchy koo which is routine procedure with babies.

Unable to understand his answers, they let him go with a warning to keep his nose clean.

"Nose?" he asks.

"It's just an expression," they tell him.

The baby is followed by a detective disguised as another baby, a deception that fools no one. The detective's outfit is transparently unauthentic, out of style, unlived in. The point of his gun in fact sticks out from under his diaper. He drools to excess.

It is no fun for him being followed. To lose his shadow the baby slips into a movie theater and sees his first film. The enormous heads of a man and woman are kissing when the baby comes in. It is the only thing he can see in the dark, two enormous mouths. Thinking the seat was empty, the baby crawls into someone's lap. "I don't allow strangers in my lap," she says. The baby apologizes, is about to change his seat when he notices the baby-disguised detective coming down the aisle in his direction. In danger of being caught, his comprehension of the law limited by his youthfulness, he asks his companion if he might hide in her purse a few minutes. There is no time to wait for an answer. He opens the snap — it is a soft leather bag, big enough for him if he folds himself over — and crawls in. "Don't disturb anything in there," she says. "I'll tell you what's happening so you won't miss the picture."

The detective takes the seat next to the girl in whose purse the baby is hiding. His suspicion is aroused when he sees her talking to her purse. The smell of his cigar advertises him. While he is in the seat next to them, the baby has to stay put in purse. Powder spills on him. His image in her compact mirror is smaller and whiter than he remembers. The air is thick with sweet powder.

With the detective close by, watching her lips, the girl neglects to tell him what's happening in the movie.

The baby closes his eyes and dreams his own very different version of the movie. Just when he is about to come to an interesting part, the girl snaps open her purse. She is crying, and the baby in sympathy cries too. The woman on the screen, wearing a flimsy bathrobe, is also

crying. Everyone in the movie house appears to be crying except the detective, disguised as a baby, who is smoking a cigar and sleeping.

The movie is very sad, says the girl. The woman in the movie has an incurable disease, which no one knows about except the woman herself and her doctor, who dies just when he is about to discover a cure. Meanwhile the man she loves, and has sent away, is fighting in a war in some obscure part of the world.

The baby is halfway out of the bag when the girl pushes him back in. The detective has woken in a suspicious mood. "May I pway wit you pockeybook," he whispers to the girl in fake baby talk.

The tears on the purse block the air from coming through the soft leather. The baby learns that it is next to impossible to revisit old haunts. Using a nail file that he finds among assorted paraphernalia, he cuts a hole in the bottom of the purse just large enough for him to slip through. A clatter of odd objects follows, but the baby is away, crawling under seats. An enormous screen is facing him, the oversized heads of a man and woman kissing, which is where he came in. The closer he is, the more frightening the picture. He has never seen lips so large or so red. When the large woman-face cries, her tears are like a waterfall. He thinks he will never get out from under them.

He is hungry, he announces, brushing away a small tear with the back of his fist, climbing down.

"Bye bye," he says, waving as he does with both hands. He patters into the kitchen and while a random thought or two crosses my mind, I hear him ask his mother for a cookie.

"And one for me too," I call after him, flexing my legs to restore circulation.

"If you get your father," she says, "we'll all have our dinner together."

Leslie H. Farber, Robert Jay Lifton, and others

QUESTIONS OF GUILT

EDITORS' NOTE: *The views expressed by Leslie H. Farber and Robert Jay Lifton were presented at a PR evening this spring, one of a series called Conversations and Confrontations the magazine's been running at the Manhattan Theatre Club in New York. The questions and answers that follow are from the transcript of portions of the discussion.*

ROBERT JAY LIFTON: I want to start with a distinction between an external arrangement of guilt and an internal, or subjective, one. It's a very simple distinction, but useful, I think, as a beginning. For if one speaks of guilt in a legal or moral sense, one is then speaking of a kind of culpability which is externally judged. We decide somebody is guilty because he is, in a sense, responsible. But when we speak of a "sense of guilt," we're talking of a subjective experience which has something to do with an awareness of wrongdoing. Transgression is a core idea here: one goes beyond some limit that's acceptable, and one experiences some sort of self-dissatisfaction or self-condemnation — often, as you know, with an expectation or anticipation of punishment or retaliation.

Of course, the distinction is never that precise. Most experiences of guilt overlap. Take, for example, religious guilt in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Obviously it includes both kinds of experience. In Freud's famous concept of an unconscious sense of guilt, the guilt is internal, but often it depends upon an external judgment, which may or may not be brought out by various analytic or other methods. And the same will be true of a kind of numbed guilt that I'll refer to in connection with work I've been doing.

Now let's turn to America and our situation now, and ask from these definitions: is there a shared moral or criminal culpability of a large number of Americans, say, in relationship to the Vietnam war? One would also ask that second question: is there a shared sense of wrongdoing, of transgression with expectation of retaliation or punishment, among a significant number of the population? Let me start out without being able to prove it — and in the end, of course, there is no

proof of these assumptions one way or the other. But though it's somewhat schematic, I would say that guilt that can be judged externally and guilt that can be experienced subjectively is there. How much, and to what degree, is another matter.

I'd like now to go back to studies I've worked with, and talk for a moment of the ways in which smaller groups have experienced guilt, and in which guilt had been a fulcrum for certain kinds of experience. For if one looks upon the problem psycho-historically, one finds certain shared themes along with certain historical experiences. That is, a population that has had a common historical experience may have a shared kind of response which can, of course, involve guilt. I want to say something about Chinese thought reform, about Hiroshima survival, and particularly about anti-war veterans, which are the last group I've been working with most recently and am still working with now.

In Chinese thought reform, the reformers attempted, through so-called brainwashing, to produce guilt, to stimulate it, both in a group of Westerners who'd been in prison and in a group of Chinese who'd been in various reform centers. To put it very briefly, with the Westerners there was great success in obtaining confessions, often what we call false confessions, because sufficient guilt could be evoked to make the false confession feel real: the guilt perceived or the guilt experienced was more real than the content, so to speak, which often was fallacious or a fabrication. (Parenthetically, the attempt at conversion to the Communist world view was much less successful with Westerners.) The issue of guilt was central because, to the extent that the Westerners could feel, for instance, that the Chinese were the only true Christians — and this was especially true of Western priests, as many of the prisoners were — a very profound impact was made and none of them left without an important residuum of guilt. With Chinese intellectuals, on the other hand, the potential for guilt was much greater, because they could be accused and could feel very pained about their separation from the Chinese people, about their elite status. In what I call the guilt of social dislocation, their very lack of anything to be loyal to was a profound source of guilt, since many of them were in conflict between their filial affiliations and their later Communist affiliations. Understandably and predictably, the process of turnover or transformation or reform was much more successful with Chinese than with Westerners. But around both, the fulcrum was guilt. Both felt a certain amount of culpability in a moral sense, if not a criminal sense, although criminality was implied in the image of the imperialist, around which Westerners felt very culpable — even if they didn't literally feel themselves to be imperialists, they did feel part of that history.

In general, though, those experiences of guilt went beyond the feeling of culpability, and had a lot to do with confession or change. If, on the other hand, one moves to the study of Hiroshima survivors which I undertook later on, one finds in the experience of survivors a more paradoxical kind of guilt, one in which, to put it very simply, the guilt of those who are victimized becomes greater than that of the victimizers. We've all heard that bitter concentration camp survivor

joke: the Jews felt guilty over surviving, the Dutch felt guilty over not doing more for the Jews, the French felt guilty over this and that, the only ones who didn't feel guilty were the Germans. Obviously that isn't literally true, but there's more than folk wisdom in this kind of accusation. Hiroshima survivors, too, had enormous guilt which had to do with what I called survival priority — to put it simply, with who died and who stayed alive; and with what I called a sense of organic social balance, in which one felt that by living one denied another person life. That one's own life is bought at the cost of another's is in many situations the survivor's image, and it often leads to the further image that one has actually killed the other person, no matter how inappropriate that feeling is.

That kind of imagery, of course, has also been very widespread among concentration camp survivors, where the atrocity-producing situation was such that one often had to literally sacrifice another's life to stay alive, and even if not, one still had that kind of inner imagery. You have here the situation in which those who are victimized are of limited or negligible culpability in a moral or a criminal sense. One could, after all, fault the Japanese for being part of the Japanese war machine, although they were often little people who had little to do with the whole process, but one can hardly fault the Jews for their part in the war or in the process of murder in which they were victimized.

Very little of the German response to guilt, on the other hand, has been articulated. The only German leader to articulate guilt in any systematic way was Speer, and frankly my sense of Speer's guilt is that it is a kind of kitsch guilt. It's there, and he's mouthing it rather well and saying some important things, but it's reminiscent of that phrase of Camus — one confesses in order to avoid telling what one knows. There is, in effect, in the German people, a potential for guilt which isn't realized. Alexander Mitscherlich, a gifted German psychoanalyst, has emphasized a process that he sees in many of his patients, which he now generalizes for the German experience, of grief over loss of the Führer, whom many Germans did love: that grief unresolved, the mourning work not properly carried through, the people are left with a sort of desensitization, or what I would call numbing, and an inability to have access to guilt over what they have actually done.

The processes I've been describing are similar, in the sense that the victims feel more subjective psychological guilt than the victimizers. Nor is there much redemptive force in personal transformation or realization for Hiroshima and concentration camp survivors. There is meaning sought and in some degree very much realized in the creation of the state of Israel, but the place movement affords less realization for the Hiroshima survivors' struggle for meaning and formulation.

In studying Hiroshima survivors I felt one had to look at the other side of the experience too, at those who made the bomb and dropped it. In reading things said by and about the scientists, politicians and military leaders who made those decisions, or non-decisions, that led to the use of the bomb, one senses people like Stimpson, who was largely responsible for the bomb, felt what can only be called awe. It's hard

to say how much guilt was involved, for while there's awe in a suggestion of guilt or guilt potential, it was never allowed to reach articulate or conscious form. It couldn't be, for various psychic reasons. At the time the bomb was tested and used, many of the scientists seemed to have almost a profound religious experience: they came out on the other side of the conversion in the desert either giving much of their lives, as in the case of Zillard and Rabinowitch, to warning the world about the weapon that had been unleashed or identifying with the force, deifying it, as did Teller and a few others. A number of them, the vast in-between, remained desensitized and refused to allow the possibility of guilt to enter them so to speak.

Finally, if one turns to the experience with anti-war veterans — again, I'm giving only a précis — there's something interesting, and, I think, very important going on. The anti-war veterans I've worked with and interviewed talk a great deal about the experience of guilt and do indeed feel guilt in a lot of ways. If one is to schematize it, one can speak of the guilt they feel as survivors, for they are survivors of a particular kind of holocaust, and also of their guilt as slaughterers. They've been both victims and executioners. Further, some of the veterans' most vivid guilt, even with those who were not committed to anti-war positions, has been for not stopping atrocities, as in the case of one man at Mylai who did not fire but remains bound in a kind of self-punitive guilt for not having stopped that massacre, even though there was nothing he could have done.

In general, Vietnam veterans have a broad sense of having been part of an evil project. This is a social experience the country as a whole and the veterans share, which I think has to do with the whole theory of the survivor: there's no rationale, no *raison d'être*, no meaning one can find, as one could in World War II, in this war to give one the sense of having to do a dirty job that is necessary because there is real evil out there. The Vietnam war is a dirty job that is unnecessary, and in some ways still dirtier because there are no battle lines. The reaction of the population, which sees the war as a tainted war and then sees the men who fight the war as tainted, plays, of course, a central role in all this.

But the point to make here is that among the anti-war veterans who, in some degree, confront their guilt in terms of responsibility, the guilt becomes energizing. So I've come in this work to distinguish rather sharply between static forms of guilt — either numbed relationships to it, resistance of feeling, or the self-punitive or self-lacerating *mea culpa*, a closed circle of guilt which goes nowhere — and energizing or animating guilt, which always connects with an image beyond the guilt and beyond the atrocity and moves toward change and transformation. In this sense, the anti-war veterans, among the three groups I've been talking about, are outstanding in their capacity to take hold of their guilt and use it without renouncing it. I don't claim this is typical of all Vietnam veterans, and perhaps it's true only of a small group of anti-war veterans. Nonetheless, it's a very interesting and important kind of model.

Now, one could say that these men are culpable in a moral and

legal sense: they did kill people, often civilians. But they are certainly less culpable than their leaders, the generals and the presidents who create what I call the atrocity-producing situation in which it is the norm to kill. In Vietnam, the veterans were being "normal," and the man at Mylai who did not fire was "abnormal," maladapted (actually he was maladapted to his combat unit for various reasons). So although they are culpable because people are after all culpable for what they do, the psychological pressure on them, toward slaughter and therefore toward a situation of profound guilt, was overwhelming. These men had to balance themselves between the atrocity-producing situation and their own struggle for a sense of responsibility.

When we move to the air war — which throws an interesting side-light on the effects of technology on guilt and culpability — we move still further and further away from the possibility of being able to feel guilt. Fred Branfman in his studies on the air war shows that the relationship to some need to explain the war has to do with how high you fly. When you fly a B-52 you don't see the ground and you don't have to at all explain what you're doing — your focus is on performance. When you fly a fighter-bomber, you see something of what goes on and you have to have some justification for what you're doing. When you fly a helicopter, you see everything that goes on and you have emotions similar to, and some in addition to, those of ground troops, loaded with guilt and potential rage.

Very schematically, what I'm saying is that although as a psychiatrist I was brought up to look upon guilt as a profound problem within neurosis, as indeed it can be, one comes in certain situations to value it as a process. We're now, I think, in danger of losing not so much the capacity for guilt, but the capacity to be in touch with our guilt, or to have an animating relationship to guilt. In Freudian theory the idea of guilt is built around parricide and the Oedipus complex: guilt is seen most fundamentally as an expression of something like parricide. What I'm suggesting is a theory of guilt in which guilt comes into the world, so to speak, not around the Oedipus complex, biologically or genetically transmitted and re-stimulated within each generation of family life, but rather, simply, around the issue of life and death itself insofar as we take responsibility for death and dying or for symbolic modes of killing or destroying aspects of others, whether literally their bodies or something more metaphorical in them or in ourselves. Separation, disintegration, stasis, are all symbolized forms of death imagery. So long as this goes on, we take on some responsibility for the fact of death, and guilt is among us.

This is a very capsulized idea of guilt, but from this standpoint, we come to an idea something like this: just as anxiety is a warning or threat, as Freud rightly said, a signal of danger to the organism which therefore has survival value to the organism because it warns us of a threat, even if that threat is distant and the anxiety itself can become debilitating where it's symbolized, so does guilt have value for the ethical organism. I think guilt has enormous survival value because it's bound up with identification with other groups, with the pain one may cause or the person one is causing pain, and with, simply, the

negative act itself and responsibility for that act. A good example of this is anti-war veterans' need to rediscover the Vietnamese as human beings in order to rediscover their own humanity. The rediscovery of that identification is very crucial to their sense of their transformation.

In this sense, guilt becomes the anxiety of responsibility. And of course, guilt as perceived subjectively is a form of anxiety. There's no such experience as guilt *per se*. It's an experience of anxiety with some element of self-condemnation or self-dissatisfaction which we call guilt. And if guilt is the anxiety of responsibility, using guilt in this very broad definition means that we require guilt for survival purposes. As we distance ourselves from the experience of guilt through technology, large bureaucratic structures, and various kinds of avoidance, we in a sense lessen our chances for survival in a time I see as an age of numbing.

Let me come back, in concluding, to the issue of collective guilt. Hannah Arendt has said that, both because of the German people's sense that they were performing professional tasks and because of the unprecedented scale of the atrocity, one can't apply the term guilt to the German experience, for that would be an external labelling of culpability. If this is true, then we're desperately in need of a redefinition of the concept of guilt and of its relation to one's actions and their consequences. Jaspers on the other hand took up the question of German guilt from within the German experience, and he made an interesting point. He said moral guilt exists for all those who give room to conscience and repentance. Moral guilt, in other words, was something to be earned and sought after. Jaspers urged the Germans to identify with all German behavior and therefore to share the responsibility for that behavior as part of universal guilt or the universal potential for doing the sort of thing that the Germans did. One shared the guilt of Germans and the guilt of all.

Here we have a model for a rather delicately stated version of collective guilt which I think is relevant to us now in America. What I'm really calling for, in both a psychological and a moral or political sphere—and in this sense, they come together—is for us to rescue our guilt, or at least our animating relationship to it; to become more sensitive in response to our weaponry and our destructive technology; and finally, in relationship to the Vietnam war, to be able to examine both our leaders and ourselves from this standpoint to recover the idea of guilt as the anxiety of responsibility.

LESLIE FARBER: I'm going to, rather stubbornly, present my own view about guilt, and really not respond to what Dr. Lifton has said at this time. Later on, I should like to. My remarks on the subject of collective guilt, if there is such a thing, will begin with guilt itself. And after that, I will try to address myself to whatever the phenomenon of collective guilt might be.

What I have to say is largely taken from an essay, published posthumously, by Martin Buber, entitled "Guilt and Guilt Feelings." Buber followed the psychoanalytic movement really from its inception and was conversant with most psychoanalytic theory. Toward the end of

his life, when he was putting together his philosophical anthropology, he decided to deal with the subject of guilt. His criticism of psychoanalysis was that, by and large, it studied guilt feelings, usually neurotic guilt feelings, and did not pay enough attention to the ontic nature of guilt. What he was trying to say, I think, if I can paraphrase him, was that man is that creature who can be guilty and know that he is guilty. Now this point of view is not very different from that of Heidegger, for example, who speaks of a primordial guilt. But my understanding of Buber's notion of guilt is that he was not confusing guilt with original sin. He was not developing the subject in any psychogenetic way. He was simply saying that guilt is a part of the human condition, and is unavoidable. In other words, there are so many opportunities in this life for injury and betrayal that every person, if he acknowledges it, stands guilty.

Now in saying that psychoanalysis did not pay enough attention to the ontic nature of guilt, Buber meant, I think, to refer to what we call existential guilt, although I don't think the term "existential" is necessary here. We could even use the term "real." But I will give you a definition of existential guilt. Buber said that existential guilt occurs when someone injures an order of the human world whose foundations he knows and recognizes as those of his own existence and all common human existence. In psychoanalysis, guilt had to be derived from a transgression against ancient and modern taboos, against parental and social tribunals. The feeling of guilt was understood as essentially only the consequence of dread of punishment and censure by this tribunal, as the consequence of the child's fear of loss of love or, at times when it was a question of imaginary guilt, as a need for punishment of a libidinal nature, as moral masochism which is complemented by the sadism of the superego. Freud said in 1924, "The first renunciation of instinctual gratification is enforced by external powers, and it is this that creates morality, which expresses itself in conscience and exacts a further renunciation of instinct."

In his essay "Guilt and Guilt Feelings," Buber makes a distinction between existential guilt and guilt feelings. Guilt feelings can be related to existential guilt—if I injure another human being, I can feel guilty. Guilt feelings can be either authentic or inauthentic; they can be neurotic; they can seemingly be groundless; and they can certainly be problematic. So the distinction is really between real guilt, in terms of an injury that one acknowledges, and guilt feelings, which may be authentic or inauthentic. Needless to say, in most guilty situations there's a mixture of all three. Now psychoanalytic literature, I think Buber is correct, has very little to say about the subject of real guilt. It has a great deal to say about the subject of guilt feelings, and particularly neurotic guilt feelings. In looking through some of the literature, I turned to Sullivan, for example, who says that guilt is merely a form of anxiety. Karen Horney, one of the neo-Freudians, has a long essay on neurotic guilt feelings in which she does a splendid job in describing the defensive nature of neurotic guilt feelings and how, very often, no guilt is actually involved—there are instead various kinds of conceits and feelings of inferiority, and of course, as she

emphasizes, a fear of disapproval. But the only sentence that I could find in her article on the subject of real guilt was just one line to the effect that, of course, it is difficult to acknowledge that one has done something shameful. Everyone knows that. And then on to neurotic guilt feelings.

My point of view, and I'll try to make it as explicit as possible, is that guilt is indeed a part of the human condition, and that real guilt occurs over and over again and is responsible for many manifestations that sometimes are difficult to track down. In other words, a person may have what seems to be neurotic guilt feelings, and may be extremely apologetic about himself, or he may be difficult about the failings of others, and yet, there can be real guilt lying underneath which is not acknowledged. Buber says, "What I call existential guilt is only an intensification of what is found in some measure wherever an authentic guilt feeling burns." He points out that traditional psychoanalytic method does not willingly concern itself with authentic guilt, being more naturally drawn to "repressed childhood wishes" and "youthful lusts gone astray." "And for the patient it is a great relief to be diverted from his authentic guilt feelings to an unambiguous neurotic one that, favored by the school of his doctor, allows itself to be discovered in the microcosmos of his dreams or in the stream of his free associations." However, he declares, "to all this the genuine doctor of souls stands opposed." Without desisting from his methods, he nevertheless "becomes aware of a reality between man and man, between man and the world; he recognizes that the goal of healing has been transformed, that all he is obliged to do becomes more difficult, much more difficult — and all becomes more real, radically real."

As I gradually creep up on the notion of collective guilt, my view is that real guilt, as distinguished from guilt feelings, is a personal thing. Its mode of discourse, to quote Heidegger here, is very apt to be one of silence. A person looking into his own real guilt is not much given to ordinary and uplifting chatter. Guilt feelings are the most bewildering of all feelings, not merely personally, but, I think, to other people. I tend to believe that everyone has sufficient real guilt in him at all times, and also has a surfeit of guilt feelings which are easily appealed to. He stands ready to say "I am guilty" almost before the accusation is made. And, as a matter of fact, as Buber has mentioned, the more general the terms are for the accusation, the more readily is he apt to agree to anything specific to which he can attach these guilt feelings. But what is he to do about real guilt which, as I've already said, I think to be of a personal nature, even a private nature?

Buber suggests, and here I may be coming close to something that Bob has talked about, that for real guilt, illumination, which is certainly opposed by the guilty person, is necessary, as is perseverance — namely, the examination of real guilt does not yield very easily to illumination. There's nothing about it that is a given. One doesn't linger over a specific memory of an injury that one has committed. Far from that. What is necessary is a courageous act of imagination about a transgression in order to try to penetrate into the actuality of the injury that one has committed. Should the real guilt be illuminated

and persevered in, then perhaps there is the possibility of repentance or reconciliation.

I've tried to think about how my remarks apply to something that is called collective guilt. And I have to confess that I have a great deal of trouble. I can believe that a group of people might very well be guilty about some transgression, some injury to the human order, that they have all shared in. But each is going to have his own private sin to confront, whether the sins are going to be sins of omission or commission. And for this reason, I tend — and I should say this is only my present thinking on the question — to think of collective guilt as really a crude term to describe the nature of guilt. There is something about it which, I think, is reductive: in a funny way, it dissipates and vulgarizes what is the private nature of a person's guilt.

Perhaps I can just end here with a response to Dr. Lifton's notion that guilt can be a good thing. I think it's a hideous thing. It's an inescapable thing for all of us. It can be contended with, for better or for worse and, hopefully, for better. So that, in that sense, I suppose it is a good thing. Collective guilt is a potent weapon. It is a way of appealing to people's guilt feelings. And since people are already guilty enough, it is very inviting to join in something that is called collective guilt. One can join in being a racist, or being a sexist, or believing that Everyman is Eichmann, or whatever. But I find something evasive about collective guilt when it is used in this fashion.

ARTHUR EGENDORF: Dr. Lifton suggested that some Germans who did not have any direct responsibility for specific atrocities might feel guilty for them. Is that a reductive kind of feeling or is it something that in Dr. Farber's terms is part of their private guilt?

FARBER: I think so. To what degree various Germans felt guilty even though their relation to the actual atrocities was a distant one I can't say, but I assume somewhat, and maybe more than somewhat. But again, it would be of a private nature.

EGENDORF: Would that be an authentic kind of guilt?

FARBER: I think it could very well be authentic. That is, such a person could look at the ways in which he had complicity, at his failures to oppose, and at the ways in which he had conspired, even though quietly or indirectly. I don't see any reason why such guilt couldn't be authentic.

EGENDORF: Then isn't it conceivable that everybody in Germany, at some point, who was alive during that period might come to see his or her complicity, even through silence, in such a way that one could speak of the collective guilt of the German people?

FARBER: I think it's possible to speak of it in that way, if you wish. But I would still say that each person's guilt would be privately considered, and he would recognize "collective guilt" as a categorical heading that would stand for his own illumination, if that occurred.

LIFTON: The difficulty, Les, as I see it, in your point of view is that despite the fact that "collective guilt" can be a very vulgar, reductive term, if one throws out the significance of that which is actively shared in guilt, I think one loses a rather delicate sense of very important dimensions of guilt that now plague us.

FARBER: Certainly, something is shared. But there's a great deal that is not shared, which has to do with the difficulty of the illumination of the actual guilt each person acquires. When "collective guilt" becomes not merely a heading under which each person can deal with his own guilt, but becomes an explanation of what everyone has done, then I think it is reductive.

LIFTON: One of Jaspers's points is that there's a kind of earning of guilt. But there's an earning of guilt that is shared in Jaspers's terms too, for all Germans were part of a certain national and racial entity that was deep into evil, even though some individuals were deeper than others and in different private places.

JOEL KOVEL: No mention was made in either presentation of what Freud said was the principal problem in the development of guilt — both in terms of objective guilt and in guilt feeling, although he didn't distinguish — the problem of aggression. Freud saw aggression as an independent, self-subsisting instinct in man. This is a very problematic concept, of course, but something on the order of guilt feeling can be an extremely important aid to explanation so long as it's kept tied to the problem of aggression, because it is aggression that will generate both the act of destruction and the feeling that one is being destructive. Even more than that, I think you have to regard the whole problem of political power and cultural power as being something that arises in order to regulate guilt feelings on a societal level. For instance, the governor's rationalization about Attica was that we have to kill the revolutionaries before they retaliate on us. The implication is that political power is something which you have in order not to have to feel guilty.

LIFTON: You know, in Freud's idea of the unconscious sense of guilt, he says he is describing something he isn't: it's very hard to get at the unconscious sense of guilt unless you have somebody right there before you on the couch and you infer, by self-destructive behavior or some other evidence, that there's an unconscious sense of guilt driving that person. I think the process has to be looked at more carefully, because in the end, given the extraordinary prevalence of guilt and possibility for guilt, what really matters is one's relationship to that guilt.

MARSHALL BERMAN: I'd like to ask you both something which may make the discussion a little more concrete. Do you think there is any sense in which it's legitimate for us middle-class intellectuals to feel guilty about the war in Vietnam?

FARBER: I don't think that it is proper to make this leap from guilt, in this instance, to the Vietnam war. I think one can object to the war on all sorts of grounds. One can think of things that should be done to end the war, or could have all manner of ideas, both practical and impractical, and still not necessarily feel guilty, authentically.

LIFTON: Here, I think, is where the element of shared historical experience and its authenticity for guilt comes in as perhaps the difference between us. I think that, since all of us are part of America and we, one way or another, live in the American realm and contribute to national and military efforts, we share a certain culpability.

And I think there's a kind of external, or objective, logic or condition, given the evidence, in terms of what is being done in our name in Vietnam, for all of us feeling guilty in a very authentic way. Now, there are many things one can do with that guilt. But I would venture to say that most of us in this room can think of certain moments where a certain exquisite conjunction of shared and very special private guilt came together. And since we are part of the American project, you know, I would see that as not inauthentic.

SYLVANO ARIETI: I totally agree with the speakers about the limitation of the Freudian concept of guilt. The main characteristic of collective guilt is not doing evil, but the non-prevention of evil. The whole borough of Queens is, in a certain way, collectively guilty for the murder of Kitty Genovese. Also, and here I'm borrowing from the concept of a Finnish psychiatrist, Siirala, in the concept of collective guilt we also have to include the guilt of the crimes committed by previous generations — for instance against the Indians or the Negroes — not for having committed them, but for not having remedied them. Of course, this feeling of collective guilt actually is not new. It has existed since ancient times. Take the Oedipus complex in *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles. Freud focused on only one aspect. The whole city was punished because it had committed a crime, but the crime was that the murder of Laius had not been avenged. It was not that Oedipus had slept with his mother. The collective guilt is the one that Freud neglected.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Bob, do you feel guilty, or do you think you are guilty, about the treatment of the Indians in this country before you were born?

LIFTON: Well, I would put that at the borderline of guilt and responsibility. Dr. Arieti put it rather strongly, but I wouldn't dismiss what he said. In other words, the fact that Indians have been massacred or that blacks have been ill-treated, and I am an American enjoying the fruits of American life, gives me a sense that I have some responsibility toward reparation. It isn't extreme guilt, but it's something that touches upon guilt in the broad sense that I'm using it. It's on the borderline between guilt and responsibility.

PHILLIPS: But you're saying both things. You both *are* guilty and *feel* guilty.

FARBER: I want to go back a few steps. A reference was made to the place of aggression in guilt. Of course, it does have a place if one defines guilt as some injury to the human order. But I wanted to add that aggression can cause guilt, of course, real guilt, but also guilt feelings can cause aggression. Someone has remarked: be careful of a man who is guilty; he can strike. If it is true, and I think it is, that people with inauthentic or authentic guilt feelings can now become aggressive about scapegoating others, we now have the occasion of a kind of compounding of guilt.

GARY SPERO: The problem is not that people are going to develop guilt feelings, whether it be universal guilt or inauthentic or authentic guilt, but that people who continue without the guilt feelings are the people who perpetuate bad policies. And that's where the

lack of guilt, whether universal, private, inauthentic, or whatever you want to call it, really becomes a disease to a society.

LIFTON: I agree with you. It's the "normal" people — the people who have more effective blockage or numbing processes against guilt or breakdown, and are in high places — who are going to do us in. But about Vietnam, there's an open question here. If one asks: how can so many people do so much slaughter without feeling so much guilt; we have some data that shows how a series of factors in Vietnam make it an atrocity-producing situation in which one feels inwardly impelled to join. Much of it involves mourning and loss of buddies without definable cause, but I have a feeling from evidence now coming out that it isn't that pat. Murray Polner's study, for instance, finds that everybody who has been in Vietnam — the hawks, those who are in between (the haunted, as he calls them), and the doves — feels that there's something strange and not quite acceptable about this war. There's a great potential for guilt. My feeling is that these people are not going to escape guilt in Vietnam, and that they are not escaping it in coming back. It may come out in indirect ways, in a lot of violence, or in severe numbing and withdrawal which blocks that emergence of those guilt feelings. And the real question, if you can speak on a large scale, is how much can begin to be articulated of what national leadership encouraged.

RICHARD SENNETT: You seem to be making collective guilt into a kind of moral awareness. What bothers me about that is that collective guilt is a very potent political tool, and it seems we're coming to a battleground in politics where the middle class is on every side subjected to a demand that it feel guilty about something. There's almost a glorification of guiltiness in what you're saying. But after all, it's meaningless for the Blacks to have whites say "I'm sorry we've hurt you." Nothing changes socially.

LIFTON: You're focusing the whole political spectrum, all of political action, around guilt; and moreover, what you're describing here is what I call self-lacerating guilt. It's the sort of *mea culpa* which is self-imposed and goes nowhere.

SENNETT: Then maybe I don't understand what you mean by self-activating.

LIFTON: That becomes crucial, because what I mean by that is precisely that moral sensitivity you're referring to, that goes beyond that moment when one group accuses another in some sort of ambitious or destructive or self-destructive way and that other group receives that guilt in an equally destructive way. That is ultimately patronizing and not forward moving. In contrast, what I'm calling animating guilt is energizing, but always has a vision beyond the guilt. If I'm in a situation with Blacks or another ethnic group or Indians, and my sensitivity to what America has done to them is an issue, I would want it to be there, ideally. I'd want to understand that whole history of which I'm a part. In that sense, the guilt relation to the past is really necessary. This is an insight of Freud, incidentally, about the emotions of the past energizing the future. Here, I'm saying it about guilt as well.

PAUL WACHTEL: But in many ways the concept of collective guilt works against the possibilities of being animating, because in some sense guilt is attributed to one by virtue of membership, rather than by virtue of what one does or doesn't do, which is an individual responsibility. And a concept of guilt that isn't tied to a particular action that should have been taken or that should now be taken is a concept that's bound to lead to self-lacerating, non-productive guilt.

FARBER: I suppose this really is my difference from Bob. The more I hear him on this subject of some sort of collective, animating guilt, and the more I hear it described, it doesn't seem to me very different from feeling some sense of responsibility for this country and its actions. But I must say, this is a long way from what I consider to be real guilt.

LIFTON: The word "collective" is the red herring here, I think. One of the difficulties is that Freud's original notion of the source of guilt was seen as inherited, genetically, through inherited images around the Oedipus complex and around the primal crime of parricide at a prehistorical moment. Collective guilt was biologically transmitted, as well as reactivated through generations. But the sort of shared guilt I'm talking about — and I'll avoid the word collective too — has to do with shared historical experience in which it can be definable concretely. And without that shared sense of history and experience, there can't be community.

PHILLIPS: Bob, I find myself a little disturbed, as I think some people are here, by the direction in which you've been going. It seems to me you've been politicalizing the idea of guilt. Aren't you really talking about using guilt as a political weapon, rather than describing the nature of guilt? And wouldn't you agree that the question of guilt involves the question of political judgment? Obviously, if you thought this was a just war you would have different psychological interpretations of the very same phenomena. And Jaspers, as a matter of fact, in his book on the question of German guilt, doesn't talk about collective guilt, and he doesn't talk about feelings of guilt. He talks about what we've been calling the fact of guilt. And he says that to some extent those facts of guilt are imposed upon Germany, by the victors. The question of guilt is really a complex one, he argues, because to some extent the French and the English were guilty of not stopping Hitler at a certain time. By politicalizing the question of guilt, aren't you introducing a new element?

LIFTON: I don't feel I'm politicalizing guilt. The two great issues of collective guilt that most people have been concerned about are the German experience and, increasingly now, the recent American experience, and I've started from them in evolving a point of view about guilt. Jaspers says very specifically that we can work toward a shared guilt, which is co-responsibility. He goes on to say: those who won the war — would that they could be perfect. That would make the task simple, because then they would be just, and we would have clear standards. . . .

PHILLIPS: But they weren't only imperfect. They were also guilty, to some extent.

LIFTON: Jaspers says in the end, and this is what I think is admirable in his essay, that "We Germans" — and of course this is true of any group that's been into some kind of evil — "have the task of forming and shaping our own guilt." That, not the politicalization of guilt, is the point. In that sense, guilt is not an abstract thing. There's no supernatural figure who knows all, is therefore objective and detached in his judgment of guilt. Rather, the give and take of history involves judgments which are partly imposed on other people, partly internalized. The very definition of what's a betrayal in the simplest human relationship has to do with some sort of social standard. That's why animating guilt very much depends upon some sort of relationship to guilt and some sort of world-view about it. There's no getting away from it. It used to be simpler when we thought that psychological issues were in isolation, outside of history, but we know now they're not.

MARSHALL COHEN: I'd like to separate animating guilt from the question of collective guilt. To take a trivial example, suppose I have promised to return a book to somebody, and I don't. I start feeling guilty. And then I do take steps to return the book to the person. Now, it seems to me that when you talk about animating guilt you may simply be saying that my feeling guilty became a cause or a motive of my returning the book. But equally well, it seems to me, it might be that it's my recognition that I'd done something wrong and my view that I ought to rectify wrongful behavior, insofar as I can, that is the cause of my returning the book rather than my feelings of guilt. I'm rather skeptical about your claim that, in general, the feeling of guilt is the cause of compensatory or rectifying behavior.

LIFTON: What I'm talking about as animating guilt would be a relationship to an act which would make me a slightly different person. I would not just return the book to restore a harmonious balance but rather would feel illuminated by my failure in the first case to have returned it. Really all I'm saying is that in a certain amount of experience I've had, which I think does generalize to a degree, there's no one cause for anyone becoming a "better" person. But guilt is part of the energy of self-dissatisfaction which propels one to a different action or a different relationship to events.

MARSHALL BERMAN: One of the reasons that a lot of us are resisting your views about guilt is that we've seen what destructive results guilt can have in all of our own lives. You talked about a man with whom you were dealing who, at one point, felt animating guilt which subsequently became self-lacerating and futile and destructive guilt. As Dr. Farber said, there are endless abysses of guilt in all of us. Once you try to use them, how do you keep a floodgate of guilt from opening up?

LIFTON: I don't think the floodgate is opened up in a paralyzing way by naming what I see to be in us. I was speaking of guilt as useful psychological mechanism for our survival, because it's very closely tied up with identification. It's part of our tragedy, and in a way I think Les and I have come around to this position through different routes, that what I'm calling animating and self-lacerating guilt get hopelessly mixed together. Les said that what Buber calls true guilt also tends to

get hopelessly mixed together with guilt feelings. But where we differ, I think, is that, although we both say guilt is going to be with us to a great extent, I see a certain form of guilt as enormously important and useful. But the self-destructive element should also be pointed out, because that is indeed what neurotic guilt is about.

FARBER: I'd like to talk about what one does when one is presented by another with, say, guilt feelings of the type "I am worthless." I think what one does is to pursue the ways in which he considers himself worthless, to understand, as various psychoanalysts do, the ways in which this feeling of worthlessness may be inauthentic in itself, may hide something more. But as to real guilt, I think it is the most difficult thing in the world. It is especially problematical for the psychoanalyst, for although it is hardly acknowledged in psychoanalytic theory, the search for illumination is one in which the analyst must often join his patient.

PETER BROOKS: Bob, I'm willing to accept your notion of collective guilt, but doesn't it necessitate more attention than you've given to the idea of collectivity. What is the maximum useful collectivity in sensing guilt; and doesn't it always produce a response of another collectivity, which is the response that one might usefully call for the moment the response of innocence? You seem to be implying that living in America in the year 1972 is sufficient cause in itself for being guilty. I really wish that were true, but I don't think it is. In the reactions of your Vietnam veterans, isn't this almost a universal differentiation? When you have a collectivity that's felt a guilt, another collectivity will have to reject this guilt.

LIFTON: Living in America now in 1972 is sufficient cause to feel guilty, but that doesn't mean that the majority of Americans so feel. I think that's a distinction. And there, the cause and effect of guilt, or the causative factors and the nature of one's experience or non-experience of guilt, are very complicated and really have to do with the way in which the experience of guilt is itself reinforced. As for the dangers of a collectivity or, let's say, a shared sense of guilt creating in another group, in this case take the North Vietnamese, a sense of total innocence, it does exist, because communities tend to juxtapose themselves.

BROOKS: But even leaving out the question of the North Vietnamese, what makes you think that America is the effective collectivity in this case?

LIFTON: I don't know that America is the effective collectivity, but we are talking about a particular situation in which America is involved. We're talking from inside of America, as Americans. If you're asking if America is the effective collectivity for the world's dilemmas, no, I don't think so. But I think the model of greater awareness or sensitivity to killing, in direct or metaphorical ways, of others or of oneself, is a useful model.

PHILLIPS: Bob, I wanted to ask you: guilty of what? You keep saying guilty, but guilty of what? I'm consumed by the sense of guilt as you talk, but I can't figure out what I'm guilty of.

LIFTON: What I would say to that, William, is that's for you to discover, but much of which we may have in common.

MORRIS DICKSTEIN: When people in the street in various parts of the country were interviewed about Nixon's mining of the harbor of Haiphong the response seemed to run four or five to one in favor of Nixon's action. But none gave the slightest indication of guilt. Now perhaps there was no guilt because attention was focused on something that was remote and technologized, not on an anti-personnel device, so the situation could be discussed tactically. But in any case there are two extremes that have suggested themselves: one, guilt will simply not be an element in any large segment of the American public's decision about Vietnam; and two, there is the opposite feeling of perhaps most of us in this room—we are closer to the idea of guilt, and to feelings of guilt on our own part, but also leery of the dangers of the manipulation of guilt. Still, both seem to have very little to do with the ways people are either jumping in to support the Army or the President or to the ways that they're objecting to it.

LIFTON: I don't know if one can generalize about the man on the street and his reasons for supporting, or half-supporting, Nixon's action. There certainly are many who are supporting him. I think in many of them there's potential guilt that they're violently avoiding, which you can see in the anger with which they say we've got to support the President. I think that in taking this extraordinary step now the administration is trying to transform this dirty little war that they're losing into a major confrontation with a great power, to create a vast ennobling call to arms, so that any guilt or recognition of the air war, which has become a saturation air war, can readily be avoided. The response to the Calley case earlier on was a similar process: not only was he defended, but in "The Battle Hymn to Lt. Calley" he becomes a great war hero. It's as if the notion that an American warrior had been dragged through the mire and had been really into evil (as indeed most men wearing our uniform in Vietnam have been now) was a violation of American virtue and threatened an experience of guilt. This was so unacceptable to the American people that they did all sorts of seemingly bizarre things including creating a kind of hero where none was. This is avoidance of the sort of animating guilt I'm describing.

FARBER: I welcomed the trivial example about the book that wasn't returned because I find this talk about political guilt somewhat numbing, to use a term of Bob's, because it takes me so far away from the experience of guilt as I know it. In regard to these people who were being interviewed about Nixon's action, I wouldn't be able to say to what degree they felt any guilt and if the guilt they felt was authentic or inauthentic. And if there was guilt, I wouldn't know what relation that guilt feeling had to do with a book that wasn't returned or a blow that was struck against a friend or a wife.

LIFTON: Yes, I agree that the possibility of their feeling some guilt—authentic or inauthentic or whatever—around what America is doing or not doing is from this distance unknowable in some degree. But would you eliminate that possibility? And would you eliminate the possibility of their avoiding it?

FARBER: I think that they could feel a great deal of responsibility about what action is being taken, they can be outraged about the action that is being taken, without feeling any authentic guilt about it.

NORMAN BIRNBAUM: I have a very imprecise question to put to Leslie Farber. It seems to me that your discourse entails a fairly radical and profound separation between descriptions of psychological states and processes and descriptions of the moral universe. It's not a clear separation, but it implies a profound one. But we ought to consider the fascinated horror with which people look at the case of modern Germany, and post-war developments in Germany, which seems to run roughly as follows. This was a society which objectively, through its political mechanisms, committed crimes. The populace was implicated in the crimes because it was believed that most of them knew about it. From 1942 onward, the existence of the death camps in the occupied eastern territories was known because the soldiers on leave from the Eastern front told everybody about it. From 1943 onward, the official propaganda policy of the regime was to implicate the population in what was being done (Goebbels's line was we're all in it together). And after the war, the Nuremberg trials and the very brief period of re-education which was followed by something else apparently only had the effect of reinforcing feelings of national solidarity, of being persecuted, of being misunderstood. So that this guilt, if there was any, was collectivized in an extraordinarily defensive and tribal way and has never yet been fully, except possibly through generational conflict, worked out in a moral way. Now, is the negative fascination exercised by the German nation in this way the feeling that we're witnessing a kind of pure psychological phenomenon without a moral dimension for the historical experience, with the exception of a small elite group which includes the present president and prime minister of the West German government? Or is it something else? Is Germany an historical aberration, that is, a nation with a purely tribal, or predominantly tribal, morality?

FARBER: A mutual friend of ours asked me, as I was thinking about this question, how come Germany stays the bad guy and how come Japan very quickly became a good guy? Part of the reason has to be the Nuremberg trials, which have been extended forever, it would seem. They never stop. There's always a new Nazi to be found somewhere or other in South America. Japan didn't have to suffer these trials. They were got over very quickly. I suspect, without having any justification for this, that the Nuremberg trials have something to do with this phenomenon that you're describing very correctly. There's something about the world imposition through the Nuremberg trials of collective guilt which has aroused something that could be called solidarity here. As to whether this is a tribal thing on the part of the Germans, or whether they are by heritage, by history, morally deficient, I wouldn't know.

Adrienne Rich

WAKING IN THE DARK

1.

The thing that arrests me is

how we are composed of molecules
(he showed me the figure in the paving-stones)

arranged without our knowledge and consent

like the wirephoto composed
of millions of dots

in which the man from Bangla Desh
walks starving

on the front page
knowing nothing about it

which is his presence for the world

2.

We were standing in line outside of something
two by two, or alone in pairs, or simply alone,
looking into windows full of scissors,
windows full of knives. The street was closing,
the city was closing, would we be the lucky ones
to make it? They were showing
in a glass case, the Man Without A Country.
We held up our passports in his face, we wept for him.

They are dumping animal blood into the sea
to bring up the sharks. Sometimes every
aperture of my body leaks blood.
I don't know whether
to pretend that this is natural.
Is there a law about this, a law of nature?
You worship the blood
you call it hysterical bleeding
you want to drink it like milk
you dip your finger into it and write
you faint at the smell of it
you dream of dumping me into the sea.

3.

The tragedy of sex
lies around us, a woodlot
the axes are sharpened for.
The old shelters and huts
stare through the clearing with a certain resolution
— the hermit's cabin, the hunters' shack —
scenes of masturbation
and dirty jokes.
A man's world. But finished.
They themselves have sold it to the machines.
It all is coming down.
I walk the unconscious forest,
a woman dressed in old army fatigues
that have shrunk to fit her, I am lost
at moments, I feel dazed
by the sun pawing between the trees,
cold in the bog and lichen of the thicket.
Nothing will save this. I am alone
kicking the last rotting logs
with their strange smell of life, not death,
wondering what on earth it all might have become.

4.

Clarity,

spray

blinding and purging

spears of sun striking the water

the bodies riding the air

like gliders

the bodies in slow motion

falling

into the pool

at the Berlin Olympics

control; loss of control

the bodies rising

arching back to the tower

time reeling backward

clarity of the open air

before the dark chambers

with the shower-heads

the bodies falling again

freely

faster than light

the water opening

like air

like realization

A woman made this film

against the law

of gravity

5.

All night dreaming of a body
space weighs on differently from mine
We are making love in the street
the traffic flows off from us
pouring back like a sheet
the asphalt undulates with tenderness
there is no dismay
we move together like underwater plants

Over and over, starting to wake
I dive back to discover you
still whispering, Touch me, we go on
streaming through the slow
citylight forest ocean
stirring our body hair

But this is the saying of a dream
on waking
I wish there were somewhere
actual we could stand
handing the power-glasses back and forth
looking at the earth, the wildwood
where the split began

Leo Bersani

IS THERE A SCIENCE OF LITERATURE?

Do we need or even want a "science of literature"? Is a science of literature possible?

Many of us might at first tend to dismiss such questions as naive or irrelevant to the most stimulating literary criticism we know. However, they have become central problems raised by current literary studies. In Europe, at any rate, it is no longer the plodding, virtually unread scholar who dreams of making the definitive catalog of all the possible metrical combinations in poetry, or of all the plots possible in prose narratives. These grandiose and forbidding schemes have become the concern, especially in France, of many of the most intellectually distinguished men and women now writing about literature. The ideal of a literary science is at the heart of the structuralist adventure. To submit that ideal to some scrutiny is a way of examining the contribution of structuralism to literature.

As a precautionary introduction, let me say that my subsequent judgments shouldn't be taken for an attempted write-off. Structuralism is far from dead; it may yet come forth with something which will expose my reservations about its value as short-sighted. While structuralists themselves are by no means modest in their ambitions, they would nonetheless recognize the gap between these ambitions and what has been achieved so far. Furthermore, I will not begin by offering a general definition of structuralism. To define the various uses to which that word has been put is a major study in itself, and it necessarily includes philosophical, anthropological and linguistic considerations as well as specifically literary ones. Jean Piaget has done a remarkable job of synthesizing structuralist approaches in various disciplines in his short, very dense but always clear presenta-

tion of the subject written for the *Que sais-je?*² collection, and recently published in the United States as *Structuralism*. For some brilliant essays on structuralist methodology, there is of course Lévi-Strauss's *Structural Anthropology*. As far as collections go, I recommend the *Yale French Studies* issue on structuralism, as well as a volume entitled *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man / The Structuralist Controversy*, in which you will find several of the papers read at an international symposium on this topic held at Johns Hopkins in 1966.

My purpose here is quite specific: I hope to elucidate some of the fundamental premises and methods of structuralism in the course of a discussion of several structuralist enterprises which have literature — or the “literary function” — as their object. In their discussions of literature, the structuralists have studied individual works; they have proposed typologies of literary discourse; and they have offered models for a new type of critical discourse. What have the results been like?

The structuralist approach — not only to literature, but also to primitive myths, to mass media, to the world of fashion — is easily recognizable by the highly technical instruments of analysis it borrows from linguistics. The use of linguistic terminology in structuralist writing does not mean a narrowing of interest to the “merely” linguistic aspects of a literary work. There has been some disagreement within the structuralist community about the place of verbal language in a more general semiological system, in a discipline that is concerned with *all* kinds of social signs. Nonetheless, most contemporary European structuralists seem to agree with the French linguist Emile Benveniste, who contends that “. . . the configuration of language determines all semiotic systems.” They would also argue that, while there is obviously enormous variety from one language to another, the fundamental structures of language are universal. Literature is a certain kind of particularization of language; its structures can be understood only in reference to the structures of language itself. If language is the trunk of the semiological tree, systematic linguistic analysis is necessary to reveal the foundation on which all human messages are constructed. And a description of the entire tree (which is the ultimate structuralist ambition) would be a diagram of the total capacity of the human brain for communication.

The appeal to linguistics in literary structuralism makes for

formidably complicated writing, and the complication tends to obscure what I think is a fundamentally simplistic approach to literature. Perhaps no living linguist has enjoyed a greater preeminence among the structuralists than Roman Jakobson. Jakobson's principal statement on poetic theory can be found in an essay "Linguistics and Poetics." In this essay, Jakobson proposes his often quoted model for a differentiation between poetic and other uses of language: "*The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection onto the axis of combination.*" For nonlinguists, this formula obviously requires some explanation. What does Jakobson mean by "equivalence," and what are the two "axes" he refers to?

Ferdinand de Saussure had suggested that every linguistic sign implies two modes of arrangement. Let's consider the Saussurian distinction as it applies to individual words. The word "boy" in the sentence "The boy is running down the street" could be studied by a linguist from two points of view. On the one hand, it exists in a linear, temporal sequence. It is part of a chain of words which occupy a certain amount of space on a page, and which take a certain amount of time to say. In linguistic terminology, all such sequences belong to the syntagmatic pole of language; and depending on which linguist you read, this placing of linguistic units one after the other is also referred to as the axis of combination, or of contiguity, or of concatenation. But — to return to my example — the word "boy" doesn't exist *only* in relation to the other words of the sentence "The boy is running down the street." It has other relations not actualized in the given sentence. That is, the speaker of the sentence has chosen the word "boy" from among several terms which, because of their similarity or rough equivalence, might be substituted for "boy": for example, "kid," "youngster," "child." Linguists have called these relations the paradigmatic pole of language, or the axis of selection or of substitution. In ordinary speech and writing, the two poles of language usually don't interfere with each other — at least not in a striking or even noticeable way. No other word in "The boy is running down the street" is synonymous or equivalent to "boy." Sentences are not ordinarily sequences of synonymous words; nor are they sequences of similar grammatical constructions, or of identical sounds. But, according to Jakobson, the axis of selection among equivalent words or sounds occasionally does get projected onto the axis of combination, and this, he argues, is what happens in poetry.

Jakobson's poetic theory is a linguistic formulation of a familiar fact. What he calls "the superinducing of an equivalence principle upon the word sequence" is another way of describing the superimposing, in verse, of metrical form on the more ordinary speech form. Alliteration, rhyme, and meter of course provide the most obvious examples of what Jakobson means by the "equivalence principle." The repetition, in a linear (syntagmatic) sequence, of the same letter at the beginnings of words, or of the same sounds at the ends of different verses, or of the same number of syllables or stresses in different lines: these common data seem to justify Jakobson's ingenious formulation of poetic speech in terms of an interference of one of the two fundamental poles of speech with the other. The argument becomes more intricate — and more questionable — when Jakobson writes: "Rhyme is only a particular, condensed case of a much more general, we may even say the fundamental, problem of poetry, namely parallelism." Jakobson wants to generalize the principle of sound repetition or equivalence into a principle of equivalence on *all* levels of language — most crucially, on the semantic level. Gerard Manley Hopkins is, as we might expect, frequently referred to in Jakobson's essay; the latter quotes Hopkins's remark that in verse ". . . the more marked parallelism in structure ["structure" here means rhyme, meter, rhythm, assonance, etc.] . . . begets more marked parallelism in the words and sense. . . ." Jakobson sums up his own position in these terms: "Briefly, equivalence in sound, projected into the sequence as its constitutive principle, inevitably involves semantic equivalence, and on any linguistic level, any constituent of such a sequence prompts one of the two correlative experiences which Hopkins neatly defines as 'comparison for likeness' sake' and 'comparison for unlikeness' sake.'"

Now it goes without saying that rhyme in poetry is often a way of drawing our attention to similarities or contrasts in meaning. Jakobson would hardly be receiving the attention he enjoys if he had told us only that. I think that the source of his appeal for the French structuralists lies in his holding out the promise that comparatively simple observations about poetry can be the point of departure for a scientific programming of all the possible forms and combinations available to the human poetic function. (He has been optimistic about "the possibility of writing a grammar of the meter's interaction with the sense" in verse, and he has shown interest in attempts to establish,

"on a scientific basis," a system for accurately measuring tensions between anticipation and surprise in poetry.) Jakobson emphasizes that parallelism should be "promoted to canon" — which seems to mean that the correspondence between sound and meaning should no longer be considered as doubtful or occasional or heavily ambiguous events in poetry, but rather as an "inevitable" conjunction which characterizes and identifies poetry, and which can be expressed in terms of "laws" of the poetic function of language.

How well does Jakobson's linguistic theory of poetry work when it is actually applied to poetry? Nicolas Ruwet, in his contribution to the Johns Hopkins symposium on structuralism, expresses some reservations about Jakobson's theory. First of all, Ruwet writes, the transformational model in linguistics has shown the inadequacy of the theory of the two axes and the need to postulate the existence of other types of relations. Furthermore, Ruwet asks how the outlining of relationships of equivalence can take into account the "infinite gradation of equivalences in a poem," as well as "the problem of the distinction between obligatory linguistic elements and those which are optional." More fundamentally, Ruwet points out that while linguistics does provide materials for the precise description of poetic language, ". . . it is incapable, working alone, of determining how pertinent these materials are from an aesthetic point of view." Indeed, Jakobson's "promotion to canon" of the principle of parallelism can be defended only if we limit ourselves to poetry characterized by the most obvious and uninteresting artificiality. I'm thinking of the versified writings of Edgar Allan Poe, who has been greatly admired by Jakobson and by several generations of French writers. In "Linguistics and Poetics," Jakobson quotes some famous lines from "The Raven"; he makes a linguistic analysis of these lines in which he manages to say everything about them except the major fact that they are atrocious. An adequate analysis of them would require some explanation of the unintentionally comic or burlesque effect (and not, as Jakobson claims, "the overwhelming effect") which, as is frequently the case in verse, results from excessive sound and rhythmic repetitions.

Jakobson writes disdainfully that ". . . no manifesto, foisting a critic's own tastes and opinions on creative literature, may set as substitute for an objective scholarly analysis of verbal art," and the French structuralists have also proclaimed their indifference to value

judgments in art. But Jakobson's theory helps to determine the kind of poetry he will speak of, and mere attention to certain texts and neglect of others operate as signs of a hierarchy of value just as clearly as the categories of "good and bad," or "major and minor," in traditional criticism. Finally, the theory also imposes a biased approach on the text. This is natural enough in any kind of literary criticism, but we must remember that this is a criticism which claims to be "objective." The pressure of the bias can be seen in Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss's famous analysis of Baudelaire's "Les Chats," where certain semantic parallelisms are deduced from grammatical and phonemic parallelisms in the poem. The major justification for this is the *a priori* dogma I've already referred to according to which equivalences in sound or grammatical structure "prompt" equivalences in meaning. Michael Riffaterre has cogently argued against this *parti pris* in a critique of Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss's study of "Les Chats" published in the *Yale French Studies* issue on structuralism. For example, Riffaterre objects — rightly, I think — to these authors' assumption "that there is always a basic relationship between actual plurality (and what it symbolizes in Baudelaire's eyes) and plural morphemes," as well as to the way in which "Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss take literally the technical meaning of feminine as used in metrics and grammar and endow the formal feminine categories with esthetic and even ethical values."

The inadequacies of Jakobson's theory can best be seen if we consider poets whose work seems superficially to support the theory. Claudel, for example, was greatly interested in sound symbolism, and repetitions are a crucial element in his poetry. But, first of all, the repetitions, as Gérard Antoine has competently demonstrated in his study of the *Cinq grandes odes*, can be accounted for by a stylistic method which owes nothing to structuralism. Furthermore, an obvious interest in sound symbolism in the *Odes* punctuates rather than dominates the poems. It helps to create a linguistically dramatic variety and not a continuous and major principle of composition. Most important, repetition in the *Odes* does not create measurable equivalences of meaning. Claudel, like Proust, uses the repetition of images to suggest the inspirational value of superficially coincidental analogies. When, for example, the poet comes back to and elaborately develops images of the sea and of a priest's white robes which had been used

quite casually earlier in the work, these images now provide new alternatives for feelings unresolved or misdirected when the images were first used. The principle of equivalence is inadequate to account for the imaginative work which produces richly asymmetrical structures. Repetition in the *Odes* makes for nothing but lopsided spatial diagrams if it is not considered in terms of Claudel's efforts to imagine and guarantee a continuous process of procreation in the universe — the continuity of paternity from God to His creation, from fathers to sons, from the Christian poet to the praise he gives birth to in his readers, and from the poet's inspiration to the poetic time which inspiration engenders.

Even in Valéry, whose poems offer innumerable sound repetitions, the static structural diagram which could depict all the rhymes, assonances and alliterations in a poem would miss what makes them different from similar patterns of monotonously "musical" sound in Poe. Valéry's subtle play prevents us from making that immediate, inevitable parallelism between sound and sense which Jakobson takes for granted. Excessive sound repetitions in Valéry often prohibit or at least arrest the perception of similarity or equivalence which superficially they appear to encourage. In such cases, repeated figures of sound (frequently in conjunction with inverted word order) work to postpone our perception of meaning. (Geoffrey Hartman has subtly defined this technique of postponement in his section on Valéry in *The Unmediated Vision*.) Valéry very skillfully keeps us in a state of suspension between a slightly stupefying musicality and explicit, didactic philosophical statement (Alain compared Valéry to Lucretius). This continuous moving between sound and sense subverts both the primitive pleasure of mindless sound repetition and the immediate congealing of sound into meaning. Language as no-sense acts as a kind of pedagogical corrective to that secure faith in sound as the "prompter" of sense which so neatly — too neatly — supplements Jakobson's linguistic parallelisms. The comfort of much bad poetry is that it reinforces that faith; the poems of Valéry, on the other hand, educate us into a useful suspicion about the regularities which poetry both imposes on linguistic sequences and exposes as inadequate structures for the poetic message.

Ruwet, as we have seen, has expressed some skepticism about the value of structural linguistics for literary analysis. But Ruwet's own

readings of poetry don't encourage us to expect better literary analyses from less dogmatic versions of structuralism. I'm thinking of his studies of Baudelaire's "La Géante" for the Johns Hopkins symposium, and of Baudelaire's "Je te donne ces vers . . ." for the recent issue of *Poétique* devoted to Jakobson. The apparatus of syntactic, prosodic and semantic analysis which he uses for his reading of "La Géante" (replete with the familiar charts and algebraic formulas of contemporary French criticism) hardly seems vindicated by his tentative, impressionistic conclusions. The charts and formulas have gotten him to what might have been the starting point for a discussion of the poem: the "ambiguous" position of "la jeune géante" as both dominated and dominating, and the ambiguity of her identification with nature. But that's as far as we are taken, and the exact nature and function of these ambiguities are not gone into. This is especially disappointing since Ruwet had begun his analysis with the most striking particularity of the poem: the string of infinitives that depend on "j'eusse aimé." But, peculiarly enough, that observation leads him nowhere. The giantess's passive-active nature — which is what Ruwet works up to — is a dull piece of information which becomes poetically satisfying only in relation to the more original and precise ambiguity created by the poet's playing his syntactical eloquence, even grandness, against the humble, self-effacing poses he imagines for himself: as a voluptuous domestic cat and as a peaceful hamlet subordinated to the giantess's royal and monumental being.

A mystery of the criticism I'm speaking of is what might be called its inadequate thoroughness. It's as if a certain analytical posture automatically destroyed the experience of the poem. A rigorous structuralist would, of course, not be likely to consider this a valid objection to his method. This destruction, he might say, is called for in Lévi-Strauss's definition of the philosopher's mission (substitute "poem" for "Being" and you will have the critic's mission): "To understand Being in relation to itself, and not in relation to oneself." But to understand the poem "in relation to itself," in Lévi-Strauss's sense, is to miss something vital in poetry. As Richard Poirier has eloquently argued, the meanings of literature are inseparable from its performing aspects — and performance includes the writer's attempts to imagine an audience and to incorporate it into the form of his work. The poem's relation to *us* — its struggle or complicity with an

assumed but elusive reader — is often the poem's central significance. The alternative to a so-called scientific method is not necessarily a vaguely impressionistic criticism, although Jean Cohen suggests that it is when, in *Structure du langage poétique*, he tendentiously opposes "feeling" a poem to "knowing" a poem. The relation of poetry to itself (if that exists) includes an experience which is not merely spatial, an experience which must also be described in temporal, linear terms. The performing voice is, if you like, an objective enough fact about the poem, but it is unavailable to the objectifying modes of analysis proposed by structuralism. The spatial diagramming practiced by the structuralists necessarily misses the poem's movement in and through the time it takes for the voice of the poem to express itself and to define its audience. This time, and the numerous verbal choices made along the temporal line, are what Poirier asks us to follow and study, and there is no reason to believe that a study of the moment-to-moment tactics in a poem will provide us with less information about the specificity of poetry than a general formula about paradigm imposed on syntagm.

As a final example of the deadening effect of structuralist terminology used on individual works, I mention with some reluctance Gérard Genette's essay on Proust, "Proust et le langage indirect," in *Figures II*. Genette has written perhaps the best essay we have on the promises and limitations of structuralism for literary criticism (reprinted in the first volume of *Figures*), and he has generally discussed literature with marvelous incisiveness and clarity. But the admirable penetration which, for example, characterized Genette's study of *L'Astrée* is replaced in the Proust essay by an irritating, and habitual, structuralist technique which can best be called verbal escalation. The essay is full of plot summary and "rich" in quotations. The only argument I was able to glean from it is the universally acknowledged point that Marcel is educated into making a distinction between words and things, between language and reality; he learns, more particularly, that what people say cannot be trusted as a literal indicator of what they mean or are. This familiar insight is "dignified" by an array of fashionable technical terms: "illusion référentielle" and "illusion sémantique," "énoncé déformé" and "énoncé déplacé," "astéisme," "synecdoque descendante" and "synecdoque ascendante," "shifters," "glissement métonymique," etc. These technical terms ex-

plain, analyze nothing: they *repeat* something obvious, but the linguistic distance between ordinary language and, say, "synecdoque descendante" provides the space for an escalation which obscures what is actually mere tautology. The following sentence, in which the first part does nothing but *name* what is adequately, and more simply, said in the second part, illustrates the strategy I have in mind (a strategy by no means characteristic only of Genette). "Légrandin's stylistic etymon is the profusely rich efflorescence of a wholly antiphrastic discourse, which continuously speaks of nature, landscapes, bouquets of flowers, sunsets, pink moonlight in a violet sky, because it is continually thinking of high society, parties, castles, duchesses."

Structuralist ambitions run particularly high in the area of research into modes and types of literary discourse. In the issue of *Communications* devoted to "L'Analyse structurale du récit," Tzvetan Todorov sums up the method: "The literary work itself is not studied but rather the potentialities of literary discourse which have made the work possible: in this way, literary studies can become a science of literature." This isn't all: the aim of these studies goes beyond a science of literature. Roland Barthes connects the contemporary interest in forms of narrative with a fundamental structuralist concern: ". . . isn't the task of [structuralism] always to bring under its control the infinite domain of words by successfully describing the language [la langue] from which words proceed and from which they can be engendered?" And Claude Bremond, in the same issue of *Communications*, spells out the continuity between categories of literary narrative and structures of all human behavior:

By beginning with the simplest forms of narration, and using these forms to construct more and more complex and differentiated sequences, roles, and ways of connecting situations, we are building the foundation for a classification of narrative types. But in addition we are defining a frame of reference for the comparative study of different kinds of behavior which, while they are always identical in their fundamental structure, become infinitely diversified due to an inexhaustible play of combinations and choices, as well as different cultures, periods, genres, schools, and personal styles. The semiology of narrative art is a technique of literary analysis, but it owes its possibility and its fecundity to its anthropological roots.

Tantalizing prospects. Such ambitions can be exciting, especially since, however intemperately, they air out the musty academic

chambers of literary scholarship. Barthes has been a stimulating indicator of new lines of study; in the second part of *Critique et vérité* and in the essay "Histoire ou littérature," he makes useful distinctions among various kinds of studies around or about literature, and outlines some potentially rich topics for "a history not of literature, but of the literary function." We will perhaps presently see some important work on the "literary function" not only in the sociological sense Barthes has in mind, but also, as the Russian Formalists envisaged, in the sense of the evolution of various devices *in* literature. However, enthusiasm wanes when we look at what we have been given so far. Occasionally, the results are comically simple-minded. Claude Bremond, for example, in an essay pretentiously entitled "La Logique des possibles narratifs," sets out to describe the "séquences-types" fundamental to all "récits." The generality and the vagueness of the categories are so great — "processus d'amélioration" versus "processus de dégradation" — that it would be impossible to argue for or against them, and Bremond uses them mainly to make elaborate and wholly uninformative charts.

More serious things are of course at stake in the group's enterprise. As Genette suggests in his piece on structuralism and literary criticism, systematic structural analysis seems to work best with myths and stories alien to our own sensibilities. Vladimir Propp argued in *Morphology of the Folk Tale* (1928) that a study of folk tales entirely in terms of characters' functions (that is, in terms of *what* they do instead of *who* is acting, and how) is facilitated by the relative insignificance of characters' identities. Feelings and intentions don't seem to affect the course of the action in the folk tale, and Propp speculated that motivations are probably recent additions to the genre. With literature closer to us, an interpretive criticism (I'll be coming back to what I mean by this) still yields the best results. But systematic analysis has been the fashion with all sorts of texts, and while this makes for a fascinating structural dismembering of primitive myths in Lévi-Strauss, it has produced only embarrassing simplifications when it has been applied to the major texts of Western literature. Why?

Barthes has said that a science of literature depends on treating the literary work as myth, that is, -- and the definition is from Lévi-Strauss — as a type of discourse from which the subject of the enun-

ciation (the person, the author, the individual history and psychology) has been eliminated. The central issue continually being raised at the Johns Hopkins symposium is that of a profound change in our traditional notion of the subject "behind" the various types of human discourse. A major "event," as Jacques Derrida says at the beginning of his remarkable paper, has recently occurred in the history of the notion of structure. The latter "has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a center or referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin." The center has been that "which governs the structure, while escaping structurality." What Derrida calls a "decentering" involves the repudiation of all those principles or fundamentals in Western thought which have been conceived of as the constant, governing source or origin of all structural permutations: "*eidos*, *arché*, *telos*, *energia*, *ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject), *aletheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, or conscience, God, man, and so forth."

In psychological thought, for example, the structuralists would argue that there is no self to which an individual's behavior may always be *referred*. There is no governing "I" which "speaks" in all my words or gestures; instead, there is in my language what Derrida would call a "freeplay" of "an infinite number of sign-substitutions." At the extreme, it could be said (and it has been said): "I am spoken" rather than "I speak." And if no human subject *originates* discourse, then everything is discourse, and "man," as a notion which has always centered human expression, is dead. In Michel Foucault's striking formula at the end of *Les Mots et les choses*, ". . . l'homme est en train de périr à mesure que brille plus fort à notre horizon l'être du langage." The consequence of "decentering" for literature would be, in Barthes' terms, "to establish a new status in writing for the agent of writing. The meaning of the goal of this effort is to substitute the instance of discourse for the instance of reality (or of the referent), which has been, and still is, a mythical 'alibi' dominating the idea of literature. The field of the writer is nothing but writing itself" — and not those realistic referents called truth and self which determined an aesthetic of imitation and made verisimilitude the basis of critical evaluations.

This position is not as new as the structuralists frequently suggest it is. In a general way, the structuralist point about the relation

between art and personality is, without the anti-humanistic bias of structuralism, a familiar neoclassical argument. More specifically, some of Barthes' statements are strikingly reminiscent of Eliot's ideas in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." The originality of structuralism lies in its having explicitly taken the argument to its most extreme philosophical conclusions. At the same time, the polemical tone in even the most tedious structuralist classification tends to stifle any self-critical impulses in most of the writers I've been referring to. In a writer as dazzling as Barthes, a certain glib assertiveness becomes particularly troubling. The philosophical assumptions about personality (or the psychological "subject" of language) which inform much of Western literature are not subverted simply by the use of an analytical apparatus which leaves no place for them. As the operational model for this subversion, the application of linguistic analyses to literary texts has too frequently involved this sleight-of-hand. The differences between literature and phonology are often ignored. Literary texts tend to be treated as if they had the same nonreferential status as phonemes, although Jakobson — who has said that a phoneme designates nothing but "a pure otherness," its difference from other phonemes — has modified his early definition of the poetic function and now at least allows for an "ambiguous" referential function in poetry.

Psychologically, as I suggested a moment ago, this antireferential bias takes the form of an assault against the notion of the text's derivation from a self already constituted. Barthes writes that ". . . the *I* of discourse can no longer be a place where a previously stored-up person is innocently restored." On the one hand, I agree that this affirmation is a necessary "weapon against the general 'bad faith' of discourse which would make literary form simply the expression of an interiority constituted previous to and outside of language." Much of contemporary art is inaccessible to us as long as we ignore its attempt — or perhaps we should say its pretention — to create its own reality wholly through the temporal and spatial dispositions of the materials it uses. Composition is self-promoting, which would mean both that the verbal occasions within a text provide sufficient sources of inspiration for the development of the text, and also that these verbal expansions actually give form to a self discovered and perhaps even invented by the literary text. Robbe-Grillet has been the

most explicit and least obscure theoretician for the idea of a “free,” nonderivative art which would create the human reality it describes from the ways in which this art constantly “encounters” its own material. The idea, as I have tried to show elsewhere, is important for *A la Recherche du temps perdu*: each page of Proust’s potentially endless work is rich with novelistic possibilities which chart the future of the story as well as Marcel’s unpredictable self-renewals and self-expansions. Proust’s novel is perhaps the best illustration we have in literature of that art and ethic of verbal surfaces which has found its most brilliant theoretical statement so far in Gilles Deleuze’s *Logique du sens*.

If it is true that Barthes’ efforts “to establish a new status in writing for the agent of writing” correspond to a primary (if often implicit) goal in modern literature, it nonetheless often seems intellectually perverse to apply a formalistic distinction between person and non-person to the analysis of particular literary discourses. “. . . He,” Barthes announced at Johns Hopkins, “is absolutely non-person,” and even “. . . the linguistic I [which, with *thou*, designates person] can and must be defined in a strictly a-psychological way.” Presented in more general terms as an attack against the “realistic illusion” (in which the “I” was the “transparent expression of . . . psychological subjectivity”), such statements, which Barthes passes on to us from Emile Benveniste, have a certain ideological glamor. But when the usefulness of distinctions meant to deliver the death-blow to realism turns out to be that they help us to classify certain sentences from *Goldfinger* as personal (“. . . thus,” Barthes writes in the *Communications* issue on narrative forms, “the sentence: ‘he saw a man of about fifty, but who still looked young, etc.’, is unquestionably personal . . .”) and others as a-personal (“‘the clinking of the ice against the glass seemed to give Bond a sudden inspiration’” — “seemed” is the key to the a-personal here), we are certainly justified in having some second thoughts. Such information is boring and frivolous, and when the assault on psychological person yields so little, one is tempted to turn the analysis away from Fleming’s prose and onto Barthes’ elegantly ruthless campaign against the self and personality. Of course, the campaign is not his alone, and the rejection of subjectivity in contemporary French thought runs the gamut from the intellectually impressive version of it we find in Lévi-Strauss to

the occasionally moving horror of self and the effort to erase the fact of birth which we have in the hermetic, bloody and rather snobbish novels of Philippe Sollers.

The demystification of traditional fictions (a proud structuralist project) deserves in turn to be at least somewhat demystified from both political and psychological points of view. Politically, for example, the effort, as Barthes puts it, "to substitute the instance of discourse for the instance of reality" can have two quite different implications. On the one hand, such statements could reinforce a politics of freedom. Human reality, in society as well as in literature, can be thought of as the continuous creation of multiple contexts and occasions which are always too rich to be controlled by any pre-existent "program" — whether it be the program of given literary conventions, or of a pre-existent self, or of a political blueprint for society's future. On the other hand, the structuralist emphasis on the text's autonomy has most frequently led not to a use of the text as a model illustrating some of the undiagrammed multiplicities of choice in human experience, but has rather led to an effort to find the laws governing all texts. The structuralists would be equally interested in discovering the laws of political behavior. And while they have cleverly exposed some of the brainwashing techniques in contemporary propaganda, popular art, ads, etc., the very notion that human behavior *can* be adequately accounted for by "scientific laws" could easily serve authoritarian political ambitions.

Structuralism wavers between an emphasis on permanent structural laws independent of any particular manifestation of these laws, and an interest in the indeterminate manifestations (the innumerable "instances of discourse" in reality) which cannot be derived from any sources or laws whatsoever. The latter interest is consistent with a political ideology which, for rigorous scientific reasons, would have to leave a wide margin in its planning for indeterminacy, that is to say, for what we usually call human freedom. If, however, structural laws are emphasized, the goal of politics, as well as of literary studies, might be thought of as the reduction to insignificance (or even the elimination) of all those particular texts — or instances of behavior — whose merely contingent, individual peculiarities are troublesome comping principal axiological models, the paradigms of variation and the transformational rules of current ideological structures in the hope

that one day we will be able to construct other functional models "capable of modifying individuals and collectivities toward new axiological structuring processes." The occasionally manifest, usually latent content of the structuralist dream is the perennially appealing fantasy of total control.

The impoverishment of experience which this dream involves is constantly illustrated in the structuralists' application of linguistic and rhetorical terms to the literary texts they discuss. There is a kind of name-giving frenzy in structuralist writing — a confusion between labels and analyses — examples of which we have seen in the categories Genette uses for Proust as well as in those Barthes applies to *Goldfinger*. To conclude this survey, I should mention another distinction from Benveniste, one which Barthes makes theoretically interesting but which leads nowhere when he and Todorov use it for specific analyses. This is the distinction between the two levels in "énonciation" of story (or "récit") and discourse. The issue is crucial as far as the absence of the subject goes, since Benveniste insists that in the pure "récit" no one speaks: we have facts without the intervention of a narrator. But the uselessness of this distinction for most of the literature we know is nicely illustrated in Todorov's curious attempt, in his Johns Hopkins paper, to sift out what belongs to story and what belongs to discourse in a couple of sentences from *A la Recherche du temps perdu*. He concludes with some dignity by admitting that "the interpenetration of these two categories is manifestly great and already poses, in itself, multiple problems which have not yet been broached." But the "problems" are artificially created by an approach to the text which starts out with an unworkable abstract distinction and proceeds as if it were a perversity of literature to mix two things which were separated in the first place only in the critic's formalistic imagination. The time wasted with this distinction is another consequence of the ambition to redefine the subject of human discourse — an ambition which has been responsible for both the worst in structuralist thought and, as we must now see, the best.

Barthes, whose mania for classification has, happily, always been undermined by a genius for the eloquently comprehensive statement, ends his introduction to the issue of *Communications* on narrative with a distinction which I like to think might have pleased the Henry James of the Prefaces:

The "récit" doesn't make us see anything, it doesn't imitate anything; the passion which may excite us as we read a novel doesn't belong to a "vision" (in fact, we "see" nothing), it is rather the passion of meaning, that is, of a higher order of relationships, an order which has its particular emotions, its hopes, its threats, its triumphs. "What happens" in the "récit" is, from the referential (real) point of view, strictly *nothing*; "what happens" is just language, the adventure of language, and its advent is constantly an occasion for celebration.

The logic of composition, Barthes also writes, has "an emancipatory value": if men always introduce into the stories they tell that which they have known in their lives, they do so in a form which doesn't merely repeat life but which offers us an open-ended model of continuous creation — "a form which has triumphed over repetition and which establishes the pattern for a process of becoming." The time of literature doesn't have to be thought of as referential or derivative; the temporal system of discourse may be constituted *within* discourse by the relation between the speaker and his utterance.

Our own relation to literature — indeed, to any type of human utterance — can be, as Foucault has emphasized, either analytical or interpretative. The science of literature as the structuralists understand it — and which I have treated here with considerable skepticism — seems to call for an analytical approach, one which rejects what we ordinarily think of as the critical interpretation of literature. Historically, this rejection is understandable. Indeed, a critique of interpretation is already implicit in the interpretive method of Freud. As Eugenio Donato puts it in his excellent summary at the John Hopkins symposium of conflicting trends in modern thought, ". . . Freud . . . was the first to see that interpretation was not normative but, at best, that it uncovers a number of phantasms which are themselves already interpretations." The interminable psychoanalytical cure is not in itself an argument against psychoanalytical theory; it reflects the nature of the instrument of understanding in psychoanalysis. To use Donato's summary of remarks by Foucault and Derrida: "There is nothing to interpret, for each sign is in itself not the thing that offers itself to interpretation but interpretation of other signs." There is no "founding origin" of neurosis, or indeed of the self. The "nostalgia for origins," which Derrida finds even in Lévi-Strauss, expresses our attachment to all those myths of a central presence which Derrida

denounces, and of which the parallel in literary history is realism or, more fundamentally, the aesthetic principle of mimesis.

But why should we reject that theoretically endless superimposing of languages upon languages which we now recognize as the activity of interpretation? In psychoanalysis, the therapeutic process is not necessarily less therapeutic because the "beginnings" of neurosis may never be uncovered. The proliferating nature of interpretation is a source of discouragement only if we continue desiring to interpret *back* to supposed sources. But the interpretation of the past can become an exhilarating process of preparing future self-accretions, as we should know from the example of Proust. As Derrida writes, totalization (or the definitive, global interpretation of experience) is impossible not because there is already "too much, more than one can say," but rather because, in the linguistic field of interpretation, ". . . there is something missing . . . : a center which arrests and founds the freeplay of interpretation." Thus Derrida opposes what he calls a joyous Nietzschean affirmation to the sad and persistent yearning for "the absent origin" — "the joyous affirmation of the freeplay of the world and without truth, without origin, offered to an active interpretation."

In literature, that active interpretation would certainly have very little resemblance to the enclosing, deadening systematizations which the structuralists have until now preferred. Freud remarked that it's possible to work back toward causes in analysis (although he also recognized the problematic nature of supposed first causes), but if one goes from psychological causes to the present psychological reality of an individual, one no longer has the impression of something inevitable. ". . . From a knowledge of the premises," he wrote in 1920, "we could not have foretold the nature of the result." The structuralists' attempt to formulate the nature of the laws which make literature possible — their interest in "la littérature" rather than in "la littérature" — imprisons them in an area of abstract generality from which the specificity of literary acts is simply banished. There is, to paraphrase Freud, such an immense distance between "the nature of the result" (literature itself) and "a knowledge of the premises" (the laws of the literary function) that the formulation of the premises seems rather useless. What literary work could be predicted (and prediction interests the structuralists) from the laws these writers

are in the process of discovering? If a description of “la littérature” is essentially different from a description of “la littérature,” how is the accuracy of the former to be (scientifically) determined? Even more fundamentally, what exactly is the justification for considering general typologies as more reliably descriptive of the literary function than an interpretive reading of a single text?

The science of literature is a timid response to the risks of an indeterminate, infinitely prospective interpretation. Perhaps the nature of literature — its most profound “littérature” — requires, even from a scientific point of view, that the reader of the literary work *continue* the activity of substituting signs for other signs which the work itself has already begun. An art of multiple interpretations invites a criticism of multiple interpretations — an exuberant excess of language which would be one of the effects of that subtle subversion of bureaucratic structuralism which I find already begun in Derrida and in Deleuze. Barthes seems to be moving in a similar direction when, in *S/Z*, he opposes the contemporary value of *le scriptible* to *le lisible* — “that which can be read, *but* not written” — in classical literature. As readers, we must become producers rather than consumers of the text.) The typical structuralist chart thwarts the risky affirmations of interpretation by imprisoning literary signs in the tautological network of names. We should now oppose to these enclosures a courageous demonstration that the disappearance of man as a founding concept can also be the birth of a richly diffusive human creativity — in the unchartered prospects of interpretative time.

PAUL GOODMAN

1911-1972

INSIDE EASTERN EUROPE

'68 AND AFTER

The obvious aim of the political trials in Czechoslovakia is to silence all opposition and avenge the fear inspired by 1968 of some members of the Party Presidium that they would be deprived of the power to which they had become accustomed for twenty years. But it is unlikely that the trials will succeed. At best, the ruling oligarchy may suppress open, active resistance for a time, but they will never get the support of the population. Given the present state and mood of society, they will not solve current political, economic and social problems, the very problems that led to 1968. The trials are, in short, proof of the weakness, not the strength, of Husak's regime. The critical, and at the moment unanswerable, question is its life expectancy.

Despite Husak's pledge on taking office, people began to be sentenced for political "crimes" soon after he came to power. During the summer of 1972, in several major trials, the defendants, all accused of subversion (specifically of duplicating and distributing leaflets, clandestine broadsheets, foreign literature and journals published abroad by Czechoslovak émigrés), received harsh sentences. Some were Communist intellectuals: Milan Hübl, historian, former Rector of the Party college and member of the Party Central Committee, who canvassed for Husak in April 1969 (6½ years); Dr. Jaroslav Sabata, psychologist, former member of the CC and secretary of the Brno Party committee, one of the main ideologists of the reform movement in Moravia (6½ years); Dr. Jan Tesar, historian (6 years). The others were non-Communist socialists: Jiri Müller, former radical student leader who holds New Left views and is known for initiating large-scale student-worker cooperation in 1969 and for having taken an uncompromising stand against the abuse of power since 1964 (5½ years); Dr. Milan Silhan, psychologist, secretary of the Socialist Party in Brno in 1968 (5 years);

Rudolf Battek, former deputy to the Czech National Council, deputy chairman of KAN (Association of Committed Non-Party Persons) in 1968, who signed the Ten-Point Manifesto protesting against the Russian occupation and the post-invasion policies (3½ years).

At the time of writing forty-seven persons have been sentenced in nine separate trials since July 17. (Apart from these, hundreds of individuals are already serving sentences for "minor political offenses.") Journalists Jiri Hochman and Vladimir Nepras still await trial, having been too ill to attend court.

The aim of the trials explains why the best known defendants, the ones most hated by those in power now, have been given heavier sentences than less known persons charged with the same offenses. Leftist parties always subject heretics to more severe treatment than other opponents, and Communists penalize even the slightest hint of real or potentially independent thought among their members. The Russian-staged purges of the fifties took their most vicious form in Czechoslovakia because that country's Communist party had a long tradition of mass support and therefore threatened to be less dependent on Soviet power. In the fifties wardens incited the other prisoners to beat up jailed Communists; today it is reported that some criminals have been promised reduced sentences "if the Red General [General Vaclav Prchlik, sentenced to three years in 1971 for criticizing the Warsaw Pact at a press conference in 1968] does not survive."

The CSCP is aware that the greatest threat to its hegemony is from those who attack it in its own language, using its official ideology against it. If the defendants were free to express their views, they might have rallied all Czechs and Slovaks committed to socialism. Having no ideological counter-arguments, the Party has to jail all those who possess both courage and socialist convictions.

Reports from Prague stress that the accused defended themselves vigorously. Müller turned his closing statement in his own defense into an indictment of the regime and its rule by force; Sabata exclaimed "We are humanists; we are Communists in opposition, you are not Communists"; Hübl defended his activity on theoretical Marxist grounds. Tesar, Müller and Jaroslav Jira, former secretary of the SVS (Union of Bohemian and Moravian Students) asserted that their activity had not been directed against the State and had been in the interests of socialism.

On taking power, Husak set about methodically to compress the nation into a compact, dutiful mass. At least one-third of the party members were expelled. Hundreds of thousands of intellectuals, trade

union leaders and workers were demoted or fired and hundreds of students were expelled. These people were not allowed to work in factories lest they "contaminate" the other employees, and the last thing Husak wanted was a militant working class. Experience in 1968-69 had proved that in Czechoslovakia communication between workers and intellectuals could develop into formidable cooperation. A few of the dissidents landed badly paid jobs as minor clerks, warehousemen, stokers, night watchmen, etc.; many were rejected for even the most uncongenial tasks and are still without work. Fear of dismissal is an effective deterrent, for the jobless are entirely without means—the dole went out with capitalism. Money is contributed by well-wishers, but this doesn't begin to cover the need. As in the fifties, the sins of the fathers are visited on their children: they are barred from secondary and higher education and have difficulty in obtaining work.

Non-Communists and even anti-Communists have been promoted to responsible posts as the need for highly qualified personnel in scientific and technological fields outweighs other considerations. In fact, apolitical people who are interested only in their own well-being and therefore put a premium on security are more easily manipulated by a dogmatic system than Communists who compare reality with their socialist values.

Pressure to conform has been accompanied by a continuous blast of demagogic propaganda. No attempts have been made to analyze the causes and effects of the reform movement. No alternative ideology has been presented. Instead a smear campaign has been directed against individual reformers, depicting them as foreign agents or Zionists, while whitewashing the opportunists of the fifties, many of whom have been reinstated—Karol Bacilek, Minister of National Security 1952-53, Dr. Josef Urvalek, chief prosecutor at the Slansky trial, and others.

Tightened censorship is another of Husak's non-lethal weapons. The mass media give only the barest of slanted "news." Hundreds of books have been withdrawn from the libraries, including the Communist party's best-selling Action Program of 1968. Stark realism is again prescribed in all the arts, and the censors have gone berserk on the stage and screen.

By 1970 the nation that had decided, albeit skeptically, to let Husak show his mettle, realized that their leader would not, or could not, keep his promises. The people were tasting the full bitterness of betrayal. For the third time in a life span the Czechs had been written off by the West; their destiny had been determined by the Great Powers. Despair has grown into apathy, accentuated by mental torpor

resulting from the deprivation of intellectual stimuli. The general decline in morale has led to widespread corruption and alcoholism (*Svet praxe*, the trade union paper, March 1, 1972). Roughly seven percent of its national income provides the sea of drink in which the nation drowns its sorrows.

Out of this soil sprang an organized underground movement, made up of left-wing (in the Western sense) workers and intellectuals. This inspired minority set out to combat the passivity into which the nation had fallen. Lack of information disorients and demoralizes a people. Apparently realizing this, Novotny kept the whole population—apart from a small elite—in ignorance of the economic situation, the military and security set-up, and, as the experience of 1968 so painfully demonstrated, of the relations between their country and others. In 1968 the people were taken into the leadership's confidence in all matters. But Husak reverted to the old methods. The underground, therefore, used information as a weapon of resistance. Several clandestine monthlies are put out. These give hard facts, leaked by screened party members, about developments both inside the country and out; they also provide expert analyses of current trends as well as new ideas, thereby preparing the ground for eventual public participation in formulating a new political program. The underground press has thus politicized again the population, whose political awareness was being gradually blunted by Husak's regime.

The underground press has boosted morale enormously. Despite the risk of imprisonment for distributing *samizdat* papers, the circulation of the monthlies ran into tens of thousands, and they continued to appear even after the arrest of their main writers and organizers. In fact, a new monthly, *Narodni Noviny*, came out after the arrests.

Besides regular broadsheets, the underground issues leaflets connected with specific campaigns. Last November, for example, a leaflet was produced in hundreds of thousands of copies, reminding the electorate of their right not to vote and urging the public to boycott the undemocratic elections or cast a protest vote against the official list of candidates. Tremendous pressure was exerted to secure a maximum vote, yet thousands stayed away, including Dubcek, Smrkovsky, Kriegel, Hübl, Pavel (Minister of the Interior in 1968) and many others. The number of abstentions in Prague was subsequently revealed as 10 percent of the electorate and in the factory districts of Vysocany and Liben 11 percent, mostly young workers having abstained. Thousands risked reprisals by deleting candidates. In one way or another, one-fifth of the capital's voters said no to the Party leader. These facts,

published by the clandestine monthlies, prove that the official vote of 99.8 percent for the National Front candidates was rigged.

Husak's present position is unenviable. He is faced with a disillusioned population and an unreliable Party that is worried about ever gaining ideological supremacy over the "Right" (Jaroslav Kucera, *Tribuna*, the CC's weekly, December 1971 and February 1972). The "sound core" of the Party "has not progressed or matured politically" since the wheat was separated from the chaff, complains the Slovak CP's daily, *Pravda* (December 1971). The Party is full of members who are ashamed of their membership. Some justify possession of a new membership card by the argument that a nucleus of decent people had to remain in the Party to curb the extremists. Many ease their conscience by helping the persecuted reformers to find jobs or supporting them financially, or by keeping ex-members informed of developments inside the Party. Others, as *Tribuna* complains, turned political somersaults in order to save their skins.

The Party as a whole reflects the petty bourgeois values of the society and is plagued by lack of discipline. Since the Party's Fourteenth Congress, in May 1971, 400,000 members have not been very active and 4,000 party organizations have held no meetings for months on end (CC report). It seems that instead of a solid bulwark against revisionism, Husak has a fifth column behind him. In fact, even Brezhnev and Kosygin attacked the CPCS for its political, moral and economic failings in January 1972. Hence the leadership is now adopting a tougher line. Members are being given specific tasks in the struggle against the "Right" so that each will be forced to compromise himself and will be obliged to defend the Party's aims in his own interests.

Husak's own position is aggravated by his growing conflict with the STB.

At the end of 1971 the Soviet leadership decided on a decisive blow to dissidents at home. At the same time Czechoslovak leaders were ordered to silence the opposition in their country once and for all and to keep information from being smuggled over the borders as this damage to Soviet prestige was particularly unwelcome before the European Security Conference. But long before the Soviet directive eighty percent of secret police work, a good part of which expresses anti-Semitic sentiments reminiscent of the fifties, had consisted of documenting the activities of the "Right" from 1968 onward (disclosed by a Deputy Minister of the Interior to the Defense and Security Committee of the Federal Assembly). One of the main sources of information are telephone conversations: 30,000 telephones are tapped in Prague, a city of one million inhabitants.

Husak has not taken a principled stand against arrests, but he does not see eye to eye with the STB on scope. Nor are all the members of the STB convinced of the correctness or expediency of what they are doing. The fate of some of their predecessors in the fifties or a possible repetition of 1968 are chilling thoughts. Treatment of detainees, therefore, varies. In the hands of ruthless men they are subjected to twelve-hour interrogations daily and are deprived of food, sleep and medical treatment; in the hands of reasonable interrogators they are better off.

Pachman was a physical and mental wreck when first released and had not recovered when he was rearrested and then finally released on health grounds. Skutina is dangerously ill from a diseased pancreas but remission of sentence has been refused. Frolik, sentenced with the Revolutionary Socialists, is nearly blind after two years' imprisonment. Jiri Hochman suffers from tuberculosis and asthma. He had a stroke in jail which left him partially paralyzed for a time. Karel Kyncl has a stomach ulcer.

As a compensation for lost freedoms, Husak attempted to boost the economy. After eighteen months of optimism, a gloomier note began to creep in. Kosygin's attack on the Czechoslovak economy was echoed by Husak at the February CC plenum. He admitted that Czechoslovakia's economic "miracle" was a mirage, and that the plan had not been fulfilled in some sectors; above all, the old illness — quantity at the expense of quality — had not been cured.

While striving to make good his promises, Husak has introduced some of Sik's reforms, drained, of course, of their political content. He has been forced to propose "elimination of obsolete enterprises which tie up manpower and raise costs" — previously labeled by the conservatives as a wicked attempt on the part of the 1968 economists to create unemployment. Enterprises are encouraged to make credit arrangements with Western exporters and banks to modernize industries.

The consumer has not benefited to any marked degree from Husak's economic policy. The import of luxury goods from the West, sold at exorbitant prices, does not alleviate the scarcity of necessities. Indeed, the widening gap between luxuries and necessities serves only as an added incentive to the collaborators.

As the trials approached, efforts were stepped up to improve the standard of living by wage increases. *Rude pravo*, however, complained that some people had received unjustified raises. To cover their failures the leaders are spreading the myth that the Party does not direct the economy and thus cannot be held responsible for deficiencies.

Recent developments raise a number of questions. Is Husak an

unprincipled, power-hungry politician, or is he guided by good intentions necessitating a pragmatic approach which the underground fails to appreciate, in either case providing a lever with which the hardliners can dislodge him? Are the Czechs blind in not recognizing Husak as a possible Kadar, or do they reject outright the philosophy of the lesser evil? Does this state of affairs prove the existence of counterrevolutionary forces obstructing the path to socialism, or it is proof that socialism is an unworkable system?

There are no cut and dried answers but a certain pattern does seem to emerge from the mass of confused and sometimes contradictory facts.

Shortly after the invasion Husak proclaimed: "We must not forsake a single aim . . . of this great struggle for a new content of socialist democracy." This may have been a declaration of faith (as his supporters claim) and not a mere tactic paving the way to the First Secretaryship. But in believing that he was capable of leading the nation along a cautious but nevertheless specifically national road to socialism (while avoiding the "excesses" of the Dubcek era), Husak made the same mistake as Gottwald and Zapotocky after the war. All three failed to recognize the Soviet Union for what it is today: a superpower pursuing a policy of expanding where it can and preserving the status quo where it cannot. Socialist ideas about man's freedom to decide his destiny and develop his personality are as alien to the Soviet leaders as "national roads to socialism." Even so, some might argue, when his illusions had been dispelled by the Czech hardliners and the Kremlin, Husak, addicted by then to the sweetness of power, preferred to abandon his principles rather than his position.

In any case, there was no single conception of the "new content of democracy" even in 1968. Two basic trends crystallized among the reformers. One stressed the importance of economic reform, delegating greater authority to managers and experts, increasing trade with the West, introducing profit criteria and market relations, while relaxing centralized control. The other underlined abolition of the Party's automatic monopoly of power, extension of decision-making to workers' councils and mass organizations, and institutionalization of platforms for the existing plurality of political opinions. Husak was never affiliated with the latter group, but technocrats may detect some of their theses in his speeches.

This would seem to substantiate the argument that the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia not out of fear that its economic reforms (in essence similar to those advocated by Lieberman in the USSR and in-

troduced in other East European countries) would lead to the reinstatement of capitalism, but because they wished to crush the political reform movement, halt the decentralization of power and prevent the rank-and-file Communists and socialists from implementing the ideals of revolution according to their own lights. In this context it is significant that today the CPCS denigrates workers' councils (i.e. working-class power) as "rightist and counter-revolutionary."

Whatever his motives or convictions, by surrendering the people's political freedoms, Husak has forsaken that part of the "content of socialist democracy" which is vital to socialism. Husak, the wily tactician, may well have reached the end of his attempt to "Kadarize" Czechoslovakia. It is ironic that a victim of the Stalinist trials should become the head of the country which is now the most repressive in the Eastern bloc. Husak haggled with the hawks over the trials, but self-interest may have been his motivation. For his *raison d'être* lies in preserving a semblance of difference between himself and the revenge-hungry hardliners. He succeeded only in delaying the trials. If the hawks decide that the international situation and Western reaction to the 1972 trials permit it, they will try to put Dubcek and some others in the dock while Husak might try to restrain them again. But he is a loser; hence his influence is already declining. Acquiescence might save Husak, but it would seem that his time has run out. It will be surprising if he is still First Secretary after the end of the presidential term of office — May 1973. It is more than likely that he will be "promoted" to the powerless post of President of the Republic.

The future of socialism in Czechoslovakia is more important than Husak's future. (It remains to be seen whether the Czechs with their living memory of eight months of democratic socialism — or rather the search for it — and long-standing tradition of democratic thinking will be driven by the specter of trials and the lack of a future eventually to swallow sterile, expedient "goulash" Communism.) Views differ on this, although the majority of Czechs believe (or want to believe) that the population's socialist leanings are strong enough to withstand even a long-term Russian occupation. Some advocate a broad socialist movement which might eventually spring from the underground and at the appropriate time would lead a popular uprising. Others pin their hope on the necessity for a softer line in the Kremlin, which would lessen tension in Europe and make possible the peaceful withdrawal of the occupation troops and the building of genuine socialism. Some put their trust in the historic role of the Communist party which, purged of collaborators and enlightened by its mistakes, will finally

lead the two nations toward socialism. Alfred Cerny, former Party secretary in the Brno region, who was recently sentenced to three years' imprisonment, said in his letter to the Fourteenth Congress delegates, circulating in *samizdat* form: "The Communist party of the future is not organized . . . it does not have a name, but it has . . . critical thinking and solidarity. The Party associated with the past has power and the means to disorient and intimidate, bribe and divide, but it cannot prevent these very means from turning against it. By its actions it is creating conditions for a new unity of all truly democratic forces of all classes and strata. . . . It is caught in a vicious circle of promises which it cannot meet. The forces of the past prevail at the moment, but the Party of the future will be born out of this very domination. . . ."

The events of 1968 demonstrated incontrovertibly that although the Soviet Union is prepared to tolerate Romanian nationalism which does not affect the existing power structure, it will not, indeed cannot, permit changes that extend participation in decision-making to the people and involve testing the validity of socialist theories in practice. The Soviet Union respects power and understands the language of power far better than appeals to its ideological commitments. But that does not mean that it is insensitive to criticism by the Western Left, and especially by Western Communist parties. Therefore, every voice raised by the Western Left on behalf of socialism in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere has significance. In the long run such protests may contribute to the formation of a genuine alliance between sincere socialists and Communists, which will cut across the frontiers of spheres of interest.

In this context it is particularly sad that Angela Davis did not join Western Communist parties in deploring the Czech trials. The statement issued in her name left the socialist freedom fighters in the Soviet bloc no choice. If they stayed in their countries and voiced their opinions, as the majority did, they landed in jail. As they were officially "undermining their governments," Angela, although she had pledged to aid all political prisoners, had no mercy for them. If they left their countries, they were acting against the "socialist system objectively speaking," and Angela regarded them as having taken a "retrograde step."

This attitude is reminiscent of the starry-eyed naivety of some socialists outside the Soviet Union in the 1930s. It could be shrugged off, if it were not held by a person who, thanks to the backing she received by the Left all over the world, including those whom she now so crudely dismisses, has the power to help them and to enlist greater sup-

port for the ideology they share. Members of two Czech underground groups risked years in jail by appealing to Angela. She turned a deaf ear. Let us hope though that their appeal was not entirely in vain. It may one day compel Angela and her colleagues to read the CSCP's Action Program of April 1968 and other documents, including the speeches of the defendants whose imprisonment she condones, and to give more serious thought to what Marxism, freedom, socialism and socialist democracy really mean.

At the forthcoming European Security Conference the people of Czechoslovakia do not wish their country to be discussed as a "buffer" state, as a territory occupied once and for all by Russian troops. They desire to become an independent, sovereign socialist republic, pursuing policies best suited to its specific needs, while maintaining friendly relations with the Soviet Union. The West might be able to help them, but it seems doubtful whether it will wish to do so. Czechoslovakia is not a stable, consolidated state; but a seat of tension. Tension in the country which lies between Germany and Russia, at the intersection of two social systems is not, and never can be, in the interest of lasting European security. It would be not only the height of cynicism, but also a short-sighted policy if the West were to buy its own prosperity with currency they have used before — Czechoslovak freedom.

When the subject of mutual and balanced reduction of forces is discussed, it could be connected with the withdrawal of foreign troops from all occupied countries, whose borders could then be guaranteed by the Great Powers. Perhaps it is in the interest of Western governments to make a deal to secure their present gains, and to prevent the spread of genuine socialism in Eastern Europe. The responsibility for lasting peace and freedom for the people to whom it is now denied lies, therefore, largely with the Western Left, and it is up to them to exert pressure on their governments so that the future will not shine only for the privileged few in both East and West.

Viteslav Nadeje

GENERATIONS

"Leave us alone" is the title of the following poem by Tadeusz Rozewicz, the Polish poet born in 1921:

*Forget about us
about our generation
live like human beings
forget about us*

*we envied
plants and stones
we envied dogs*

*I would like to be a rat
I used to say to her*

*I would like not to be
I would like to fall asleep
and wake up after the war
she would say with her eyes shut*

*forget about us
don't ask about our youth
leave us alone¹*

In any articulate society there are, I think, four active generations: the senior, the central, the recognized and the new. It takes about thirty years for the two older ones to be replaced by their younger equivalents, themselves meanwhile being replaced by new-born generations. In Eastern Europe, the thirty years in question — the last thirty years — have been momentous.

Those now senior were already adults when the war started. They lost relatives and friends, suffered and starved, some barely escaped with their lives. They saw the destruction of their countries and the death of seven and a quarter million people. After the war, they witnessed — and some participated in — the destruction of the world in which they had grown to adulthood.

Then central in the working force, this was the generation most

1 *Post-War Polish Poetry*, Ed. and trans. Czesław Miłosz (London: Penguin, 1970), p. 78.

directly affected by the Party's policies of economic and social transformation. Working-class people brought into managerial positions could see themselves proudly as the proletariat rising to leadership in society. For members of the former middle classes, however, it meant political resistance plus a struggle to save their own positions and often their livelihoods. The industrial proletariat became more and more disaffected by the contrast between the Party's millennial propaganda and its own actual situation, socially improved but economically much the same as before and politically worse. The peasantry, made to pay the cost of industrialization and herded meanwhile into collectives by an elite contemptuous of the peasant's mind and way of life, had no reason to see the regime as anything but a form of war on itself.

It was hardly surprising if the majority of this generation appeared all too ready to trust Western rhetoric about "rolling the Soviets back." And even when no action had followed the rhetoric, though many were disillusioned, not a few of the oldest still kept that image of the West as Savior: "When my grandfather was dying," a twenty-seven-year-old artist told me in Bulgaria, "the priest was called. After the old man had confessed and it was all over, the priest asked him if he had anything more to say or ask. 'Tell me, father,' the old man said, 'when do you think the Americans might be coming?'"

After Stalin's death, and as a result of subsequent political as well as economic and social developments, the generation growing senior achieved a degree of consolidation. Attitudes have remained largely unchanged, and many deep hatreds are not forgotten. Most non-Communists have continued to see the regime as essentially a Russian imposition, while many Communists have remained at heart the men they became under Stalin. But the sheer necessity of coping, along with nationalism, and with the authoritarian tradition and political system, which placed all essential responsibilities in the hands of the older age group, have re-created the unity of a generation.

Where non-Party experts are accepted, as in Hungary, the older ones now hold about as many posts of importance, from village headships to export management, as do their Party colleagues. Where they remained unaccepted, many of them entered the Party to gain good jobs, and frankly advise their children to do the same. And in all East European countries their power remains far greater than it is in the pluralistic and more affluent societies of the West, because the centralism of the economic and state machinery leaves the young little hope of promotion over the heads of their elders and because children also become financially independent much later.

The next, now central, generation was still at school or just out when the war began. A part of it saw active service, each year making up more and more of the soldiery both at the front and in the underground. The Polish resistance had whole scout regiments, the older ones fighting, the younger ones engaging in sabotage, reconnaissance, and other auxiliary activities while the youngest children joined the underground simply by going to school: "I was nine then," a thirty-eight-year-old doctor in Warsaw remembered, "and we used to meet in small groups at a different person's house each day for our lessons. We knew we mustn't talk about what we did, because the whole school network had been organized by the resistance, and if the Germans found out they'd take away our teachers and perhaps us too."

The war over, the generation then in its mid-teens to mid-twenties found itself facing not just the task of physically reconstructing each country, but also the chance of effecting enormous changes. Unlike its immediate elders, conditioned by a world the war had swept away, it had truly historic choices in politics. Almost inevitably it shifted toward the Left, its conservatives becoming centrists (often even in their formal religious organizations) and its left reformers turning into revolutionaries.

Once the Party had acquired full power in each country, however, this generation went through a "younger" version of the same Stalinist experience as its parents. It profitted, or suffered, from discrimination at universities, had its norms raised in factories and went on free holidays to workers' rest homes, saw its peasant elders being whipped into collectives or persecuted, and learned from its own experience to dread and hate the police. Non-Communists saw in all this the confirmation of their worst fears, and more often than not turned back to the Right. But many of the Communists of the same generation, even if they recognized terror as terror, remained faithful to their leftist visions for quite some time: "I very much believed that here at last something good was happening," a forty-two-year-old construction engineer told me in 1969 in Romania. "In 1947 I was at university and we went in voluntary brigades to build a railway and we were real volunteers, not like the students today who go because they have to. It was a joint project with the Yugoslavs, and even when, at the time of the quarrel with Tito, it was denounced and I think some of its organizers disappeared, I went on believing. . . . Perhaps it was that I very much wanted to believe, because I thought this country needed a revolution, and this seemed to be it." Once de-Stalinization set in, however, while it gave new strength to the non-Communists, it also shook many of those who still "believed" in terrible and often fruitful ways.

Meanwhile, the need for modernization in each East European

country has created both the possibility of new alignments within this now central generation, and the virtual certainty of a conflict between it and most of the older generations. This has been especially the case in the managerial strata, where many of the seniors are earlier political appointees, while most of their juniors have come up through education since. Thus while the central generation may itself be divided into factions favoring different approaches to current problems, it is increasingly united in a vision of most seniors as sclerotic, to be pensioned off at the first opportunity.

This is why the Partisan faction in Poland, for example, tried almost from its formation in the early sixties to present itself as the champion of, among others, the technically trained intelligentsia against the political fuddy-duddies. But they were only to be outflanked when, after the events of March 1968 and the Partisan bid for power, younger men began to be promoted by Gomulka in the Party and the managerial strata: "Look at me, I'm thirty-eight and the man I replaced was sixty and the one billed to succeed him actually sixty-five," the new editor of a Warsaw weekly, a none too likeable but basically realistic man, said to me in June 1970. "What have I and people of my age to do with the Partisans? We can thank them for having stirred things up, and created a chance for us to come in. But as regards any ideas of what to do about Poland, they're still in the woods where they were in the days of the resistance, and on the platforms of 1945-48, demolishing the prewar regime. . . . That too was important, I myself fought and then made propaganda, but now we have quite different things to do."

The main generation gap is usually considered to lie between the two older and the two younger active age groups. In Eastern Europe, this gap is in some respects narrower and in many other respects much wider than in the West.

It is narrower, first of all, due to the sense of shared vicissitudes: "We've had a terrible life," a sixty-three-year-old stonemason whom I was interviewing with his grown-up son told me in Transylvania. "But sometimes when I think about it, I think I'd like it even less if I were your age. Our life has been your childhood. And God knows what you may be seeing yet." In debates about youth in the media, while nationalists of all shades may call for more patriotic socialist education, members of the central generation of the Left tend rather to talk of their own duped heroism as a source of present sobriety.

The young themselves have often been more aggressive, partly in self-defense: "It may be true there didn't use to be such dancing crowds as ours," a student fan said in 1968 on a Hungarian TV program about the pop craze. "But it happened that a pop singer named Adolf Hitler

did this thing, not so long ago, and the people who are now adults went even crazier about him than we go about pop, and with much uglier results.”

They have also at times gone on the attack, more especially at the start of major de-Stalinization in any country, when the lies and horrors of a whole period suddenly began to be revealed. In Czechoslovakia, for instance, a poet, twenty-four years old in 1962, published a virtual manifesto entitled “Poems for the Cat” (“No-good Poems”) in which he denounced all those who had subscribed to the cult of Stalin as undeserving of the trust of anyone, but especially his own generation. Some young people demurred from his wholesale attack, but clearly he had expressed the thoughts of many others, as one of those attacked recounted in his long and earnest “Attempt at a Reply” (published in the writers’ weekly in 1964).

The young have never quite understood the blind enthusiasms of their elders, but they have become much less aggressive. The shock of revelations has worn off. Just as important is the effect of the Party’s rule on young and old, enthusiasts and skeptics alike. In fact, the main reason why politics is unlikely to become the kind of generational issue it has at times been in the West is that no East European Party has a stronger mandate from one age group than from any other.

The gap is also narrow in general standards of behavior. On the whole any western visitor would find the majority of young East Europeans, both in their looks and in many of their ideas, almost as conservative as their parents.

Where the gap between the generations is considerably wider than in the West, the difference has to do mostly with a concentration of effects. Many of the cultural and subcultural influences which have widened the traditional gap in the West have been spreading to Eastern Europe at the same time as its own rapid development has been changing life there. And this has coincided with a propaganda barrage aimed at the young and dismissing the old as doomed.

The resulting cleavage has been deepest between peasant parents and their newly educated and now town-dwelling children. Bad enough if the young have become workers in distant factories from which they rarely return; it is even worse if they have risen on the social scale and feel they have to reject their origins. This has been most common in Poland, where distances are among the largest in Eastern Europe: movement to the towns has been the greatest, and respect for social status always was and has remained the strongest: “Peasant parents with children away at secondary schools and universities will quite

literally kill themselves working so the young can have a carefree time to study and get ahead," a sociologist working on youth problems explained in Warsaw in 1970. "When children come back in the summer, if they just want to rest, often even parents who badly need help in the field won't dare to ask for it." And the parents who do ask for help may get dirty looks along with the help.

Though the separation is less formal, the conflict is only more continuous and often more vicious in peasant families where parents and children have stayed together. This is true even in the village, where the mass media and the spread of new occupations and of urban ways of life have naturally affected the young much more than the old. But the conflict is sharper where families have moved to the city, as very many have. In the new environment, while parents are put on the defensive about small-town ways often to the point of absurdity, the children are not only surrounded by more urban influences, but find support in their city-grown friends, whom they may also try to "out-urban" in general behavior and in rejection of their parents. And even though the arguments usually involve a crossing of patterns, since migrant children are almost as different from their new friends as from their parents, family tension remains high.

In all families, however, including those who have lived in cities for generations, the gap between parents and children in Eastern Europe has been widened not only by rapid social development but by the still more rapid spread of education. In the majority of East European families today, the grown children are likely to have had a minimum of four, but often eight or even twelve, years' more schooling than their parents. Thus whatever has "smartened" the young against the old the world over has been amplified in Eastern Europe by the effects of suddenly expanded education.

A similar conjunction has divided the life styles and general outlook of the young from those of their parents. Largely rural societies have suddenly become at the very least half-urban, while starvation and poverty have given way to a decent standard of living and in some cases at least semi-affluence. This has affected people's existence as much as their attitudes, creating strong contrasts between those whom development overtook in an often traumatic way and those who have grown up with it and accepted it as a part of their reality. Not only do many of the new trades and professions, from car-polishing to computer science, belong to the young, but so do most of the new machines, furniture and gadgetry surrounding them at work and increasingly at home. Attitudes about money, about work, about free time, about

household chores even, are sharply different: the woman who just a few years ago was looked at as a proper housewife is now seen as the old-fashioned mother-in-law, grumbling about the emancipated laziness of her son's young wife a good deal more than does her opposite number in the West.

In addition, the accelerated development of the last twenty-five years has been seen by substantial parts of the peasantry and semi-rural groups in Eastern Europe as an alien menace. In the early days, which are not forgotten, this reaction generated a nationalist resistance to the Party as the agent of two very different phenomena: Western industrialization and Soviet Communism. Now, the same generation which in the 1950s hated Russian folk songs on the radio hates pop music as equally foreign, and would have it banned in favor of the national folk songs.

It is in this general context that the Party's dialectical-futurist propaganda has helped to arm the young against their parents. Combined with the effects of rapid development, it has given the word "old" not just a derogatory, but almost a denunciatory, meaning. At the same time, it has given the word "modern" the sense of "unquestionably best," whether applied by East Europeans to electronic equipment, outdoor lavatories, hair styles, or human emotions. In arguments between young and old, the terms are, of course, applied with a special force, and if the argument involves politics, then the dialectical rationale may come to be employed in the original sense, separating the young as the vanguard of the future from the old.

This, however, can be of little comfort to the Party. It, too, is often faced in arguments with the young by the rationale it has itself so often emphasized: "We the young people are the owners of the present," wrote an eighteen-year-old school boy in the Bulgarian Youth League paper in 1967. "The old times are passing into history, and you'll do us a favor by not reminding us of them over and over again. You do nothing but lose our confidence."

In fact, its membership statistics show a clear generational drift against the Party. Among students in Budapest, for example, in 1968 only 1.1 percent (two-fifths of the 1963 percentage) were Party members, while in Czechoslovakia in 1971, over two-fifths of the Party's working-class members were pensioners. Were Lenin writing today, in all honesty he would have to begin with "We are the Party of the future which, however, seems to belong to the old."

Of course, apart from boredom with its rhetoric, the main reason for the Party's aging is that it is at the heart of a centralist system

which, as I have already hinted, is hostile to the young: "We hear it all the time," a thirty-seven-year-old electrical engineer told me in Prague, "from the twenty-eight-year-olds, but even more from the boys just out of the university. 'There you sit,' they say, 'in the jobs you got ten, fifteen years ago, with your arses getting bigger and bigger and blocking the way.' And they're quite right, from their point of view. But there are even bigger arses blocking ours."

Of the two younger generations I have called the "recognized" and the "new," the first consists of people already involved in the business of their own lives and recognized by themselves and the rest of society as the young adults of their time. The second is only emerging to independence and to a sense of its own identity.

In Eastern Europe, I found the pattern of contrasts between these two age groups much the most intriguing; it reflects the contrasting histories in which they have grown to consciousness.

Though fairly clear to me now, the pattern only began to occur to me during the fourth week of my initial trip through Eastern Europe, in Romania in 1968. On my first Sunday in Bucharest I wandered into a circle of young people discussing literature at the University Club. There were about twenty of them, sitting in a large room shaded from the May morning sun, reading their own stories and poems and arguing about them fiercely. I sat down and in whispers explained who I was to a gypsy-faced boy of about twenty-two. He turned out to be the chief critic of the circle, and he translated for me the goings on.

One of the stories read was called "Hegel in the Bar." It seemed to have everything, an absurd situation, neo-surrealistic style, disillusionment, self-pity, digs at official parlance and philosophy, in short everything that could seem rebellious in Eastern Europe. Yet it was torn to pieces. "There's already an inflation of this sort of stuff, it's too easy, it's pseudoliterature," one of the boys said. "Unless it's done far better than a lot of people are already doing it, it's not worth doing at all."

This seemed to me, still fresh from the West, a cruel judgment. Hadn't the piece been a brave act of defiance against socialist realism? "Oh, we're long past that," the gypsy critic said. "By now we're even fed up with the reaction against it. We want something really new. Unlike both the vulgar sociology that used to be served here as literature, and the antidote which so many people are writing now." Cruelty, it seemed, had been a matter of sophistication.

"Yet they're also more tolerant than we used to be," a thirty-one-year-old teacher to whom I related the story in Poland said. "I see them

sometimes watching an improvised play or an amateur pop group. I know we'd have hooted the same people off the stage. But not them. If it's not professional, that doesn't matter; what matters is that somebody is trying to do what he wants to do without posing. I think, basically, they're much less self-conscious than we were." This must cut both ways, making them both more cruel toward what is sham, even if it appears rebellious, and more tolerant of the unrehearsed, provided it is authentic.

"I think it's that they have many fewer fears, in general," a twenty-nine-year-old raw materials buyer said in Hungary. "We've nervousness in our bones. Often we're much more afraid now than we need be. If we were given power tomorrow, I doubt if many of us would know what to do with it. I think they would, or at least they would try." Which again would be an aspect of being less self-conscious, less cowed by precedents and possible consequences.

"They have a much closer contact with life," a thirty-four-year-old artist said in Romania. "They believe, or at least some of them, in action, much more than we can. It's not just a matter of still fresh nerves. They'll look at a situation just as it's there, in front of them, and then find ways to go to work on it, ways we might never think of trying. That's courage."

"I rather think they're more factual, less melodramatic about things," a thirty-one-year-old sociologist said in Slovakia in 1969. "They have many fewer problems about religion, for instance. I don't mean there aren't any who are religious among them. But just as the business between the Church and the State is different from what it was in the fifties, so inside them too there's not the same intense struggle between Communism and religion, or between sexuality and religion, there was in quite a few of us." Less than a year later, a survey published in the quarterly of the Sociological Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences showed that the percentage of conscious atheists was in fact much higher in the 25-39 age group, who had been through those more "melodramatic" experiences with religion and Communism, than in the 18-24 age group, that is, the new generation, among whom agnosticism was most widespread.

"Their concerns are just very different from those we had," a twenty-eight-year-old woman, member of the Party, said in Budapest. "The other night I went up to the Youth Park. I was amazed. It's not the crowd that used to go to Saturday dances when I was sixteen. Perhaps, if I were sixteen now, I too would be interested not in ideology and books but in the Rolling Stones. Or, at best, in both."

The differences between the two age groups are less clear to the new generation, partly, no doubt, because it is as yet less conscious of its own identity. But its admission of this is in itself important. In Hungary, I saw a film based on stories of pure fantasy which an eighteen-year-old, trapped in a half-built house for a night, might be telling himself and two hitch-hiker friends. In an episode shot as *cinéma vérité*, the three of them could be seen wandering down a busy street in Budapest, shouldering boards on which nothing at all is written.

"Are they fed up with all the slogans they and their parents have had to carry?" I asked the director, who had been twenty-four at the time of starting the film.

"That too, perhaps," he said. "But even more I was trying to suggest that anything could be written on those boards. There's an early time in every man's life and in the life of every society when they just can't tell what their experience means. And then you want to be honest and not cover it up with false confidence and brash slogans."

That part of the new generation prepared to be involved in political or social action also tends to see its preparedness as a basic difference between itself and its elders: "He's a broken man," a twenty-two-year-old said about a writer of thirty-four specializing in youth affairs in one of the East European countries. "I mean, he's seen too much trouble, as they all have. He's accepted the system and doesn't want to push it. Which is all right as far as he's concerned, but when he imputes the same feelings to us, that's bad. It's not true, and it's not helping anybody. Not us, not him or his generation, nor even the people at the top."

But irrespective of how much the two halves of the younger generation recognize the differences between them, these are abundantly evident in their behavior, as I discovered in Poland, where I arrived in 1968 at a critical time. Repression after the March student riots was just reaching its climax. Stories of beatings by police, long interrogations, listening devices openly installed in students' rooms, police agents in strategic rooms in hostels, and so on, cropped up in countless conversations. Yet it was the students who were least afraid to talk, even if I just accosted them in the street. By contrast, people about thirty and older very often refused to talk to me "in such bad weather," as one of them put it, when a good friend of his and mine was trying to introduce us. More than once, people to whom I was bringing news from friends abroad subjected me to a painful period of interrogation before they were convinced that I was not a secret policeman posing as the friend of a friend.

That period to which there can hardly be a full return left indelible marks on what is today's recognized generation in Eastern Europe, however. Regardless of their current political views, they are Stalin's children. They were born just before and during the war, in which they lost relatives, and not a few their fathers or even both their parents. An important part of their childhood experience had been the physical deprivations and mental shocks which had prepared the way for what happened after 1945 — and also left a mark on the psyche of their parents. After 1948, they found themselves, still as children, in yet another war situation. This time it was internal, but that made its effects only more pervasive, enveloping each family and each individual. Indeed, this war situation, with its special atmosphere, its shortages, its amorality, its terror, its insane propaganda, appeared to be a normal way of life, presided over by the enduring figure of Stalin the Father.

That image of Stalin is still remembered by many of his children: "One day in my third year at school," a twenty-nine-year-old agricultural technician in Romania remembered, "I made my mother very angry. 'You'll be the death of me,' she said. 'Never mind,' I said. 'If you die, I'll go to Comrade Stalin and be his son.' She slapped me and then she just cried."

"When Stalin died, I was a little worshipper, and secretary of my school form," a twenty-seven-year-old woman in Poland recalled. "I was stunned. What's going to happen to us now, I thought. On the radio all you could hear the whole day was the announcement, and slow music. But the children in the class seemed very happy. Their parents must have told them this was good news. But I didn't understand that at the time. I could only think that they must have gone mad, and it frightened me."

And though Stalin himself has since been removed from the Moscow mausoleum and almost expunged from the history books that he once dominated, his children have hardly been able to forget the debt they owe him, in both love and hatred. "When Stalin died I wrote a poem that was full of sincere sadness," said a thirty-three-year-old Bulgarian poet. One of the best of his generation, he had become a Communist at the age of fifteen and has remained a Party member to this day. "And I wouldn't take back a single word of it. Because if I did, I'd also have to take back the anger I felt when I found out what kind of a man Stalin had really been. I never mention his name now, but everything I write in a way expresses my feelings about this epoch."

"Miserable Stalin," a twenty-seven-year-old Czech poet had written in 1962, following the Party decision to take down the tyrant's enormous statue overlooking his city.

*So now at last it is to melt
this extravagant iceberg in the midst of Prague
one-tenth of which
floats on the city's rooftops
and nine-tenths are within us*

*Slowly
without cease
the heavy turbid water
snakes forward*

*In the moraine underneath
each of us can find
his foundation stone²*

To the new generation, the Stalinist epoch is history and Stalin the name of a man whose picture they were told by their teachers to tear out or paste over in their history books until new books could be printed. Of course, aspects of Stalinism have survived, and where they have been abolished they can be revived, often with the same effect. In Poland itself in 1968, even students who suspected their own roommates of working for the police were open with me; by 1970 I found many of them worried about meeting a foreign writer, and not a few refusing to do so.

But this is, I think, a matter of outward behavior, and not, as it was for many people in the fifties, of inner psychology. Both enthusiasms and fears reach only so far down. The same foundation stones cannot be laid again. In the economy and in politics, versions of Stalinism may appeal to smaller or larger groups in the Party. But the demiurgic aura of a Stalin and the passions of his world are unlikely to be reborn in the lifetime of the new generation of East Europeans.

Of the two main reasons, one is that the parties Stalin put in power can no longer claim any rights to the heroic passions and authority that Stalin abused. "I want to ask what comrades in the highest positions did to prevent the development of the personality cult," a Youth League member who had obviously been a sincere Communist said in a long letter published in *Po Prostu*, the famous Warsaw student weekly, in March 1956³: "It was not my fault if Stalin exalted himself

2 Antonin Brousek, "The Monument," *New Writing in Czechoslovakia*, ed. George Theiner (London: Penguin, 1969), p. 202.

3 *Po Prostu*, 25 March 1956, in *East Europe*, Vol. V, No. 6. (New York: June 1956), p. 39.

above the Party. . . . Even if I had known the true state of affairs, I would not have been able to say anything. I would like to know why. . . . I know this is a chaotic letter, but it cannot be otherwise because there is chaos in my mind. However, I can see a certain fact emerging from that chaos. You see it also: all along the line, from the basic Party organizations up to the Secretary of the Central Committee, there are no authorities."

The effects of the shock also remain ineradicable. "I'll tell you why I don't think there'll be great trials here," a twenty-seven-year-old Prague journalist said to me in 1970. "One of the reasons is, of course, that whether or not the people at the top know what it means to be involved in such trials from personal experience, they know that once they start real terror they can never stop it before they themselves have been destroyed. But the other reason is that show trials would be pointless. In the fifties, a lot of people really did believe that Slansky and the others had been guilty. My own father believed it. But today, even if they could prove Dubcek had been selling the country to the Americans, bit by bit, and show receipts with his signature for every dollar he got, people would say, thanks very much, we've heard and seen all that before."

Another basic reason why Stalinism could not again inspire the same heroic passions has to do with the change from a continuous emergency situation to a time of peace and a much richer life. The new generation has grown up in increasing prosperity and has acquired ambitions and concerns very different from those of its elders. "I think one of the reasons we cared more about books and ideology and religion, reflected the twenty-eight-year-old Budapest woman I quoted earlier, "was that we were poor. Little Communists or reactionaries, all of us. We had little else to play with, you might say. My parents were both teaching at the university, so we lived well enough; still, when I was thirteen my pocket money for the week would have bought me a bar and a half of chocolate. I don't think I knew anybody my age who had a radio of his own, never mind tape recorders."

Nor has enrichment been just material. With the passing of heroic isolationism have gone its hysterically simplified images of the world, and the school curriculum as much as the scope of what the young can read and hear and see has enormously widened. "What do you envy them most?" I asked the thirty-three-year-old Bulgarian poet about the boys who now brought their poems to him for an opinion. "Their greater knowledge," he said. "Their much wider horizons." Knowledge which, less enclosed by a rigid framework, has also been kept in motion by doubt. "Do you think an intelligent man should always be sure of

what he is saying?" I asked a Prague class of sixteen-year-olds. "No, no," they said immediately. "A man who is always sure of what he is saying can't be intelligent. An intelligent man knows he doesn't know everything."

Of course, Party propaganda still had a genuine effect on what may be called the "fifth generation." "When Czechoslovakia was invaded," a sixty-six-year-old Party member told me in Budapest in 1970, "my granddaughter and I were watching the news on TV together. She's only seven, but of course she wanted to know what all this was about. What could I say? I said there had been some problems in Czechoslovakia, but now the Russians went in and things would be quiet. She wanted to know if the Russians were good people. I said they were people, there were good and bad people among them, like in every other country. Next morning we went down shopping together. As we stood there in the queue, she heard others talking about Czechoslovakia. And she started telling them not to worry, there had been some problems there, but things would be quiet now, the Russians were good people and they'd take care of everything."

"It can also be quite frightening," said the thirty-eight-year-old Polish doctor quoted earlier. "As you know, for about two years now we've been having these terrible war films, and war serials and propaganda on TV and radio. All the time, Polish heroism and the crimes of the Germans. We know it has to do with the Partisans whipping up nationalism, but you should see the children playing in the street. 'Shot you, bloody German, down, bang, bang, German swine, you're dead.' I'm really afraid of what will happen when these children grow up."

My own view is they'll have forgotten most of it as games, unless the Germans should meanwhile oblige by living up to the Partisan image. Judging by all my interviews, whatever East European children may or may not believe now, there is much less chance of even a minority of them turning into adult fanatics than there was in the fifties. To compare beliefs with reality is an essential part of growing up, and young people in today's Eastern Europe have far more access to reality than they did in the Stalinist years.

Equally significant, those of my interviewees in the new generation who had come through belief to skepticism almost invariably put their change at the age of 16-17. It had been part of their becoming aware of the world during adolescence, rather than the mature crisis the same awakening meant for many older Communists. "If I quote Lenin to a class of fourteen-year-olds," a language teacher of twenty-nine said in Bulgaria, "they'll accept it as a matter of course. But if I quote the same kind of thing to the boys who are seventeen or eighteen,

they'll look up at me as if to say, 'What's the matter with him, he was all right a minute ago.' "

It must be said that while the effect of the Party's propaganda on the young has been declining, the Party too has learned to give up some of its romantic illusions about its identity with the young. In the old days, Party spokesmen used to state categorically on the one hand that under socialism, which resolved all contradictions in society, there could be no such thing as a conflict of generations, and on the other that in the conflict of generations the Party and the young together formed the vanguard of the future against the rest. These categorical statements not only made nonsense of each other, but also completely failed to make a dent on reality. As truths began to be admitted, the Party began acknowledging that it was puzzled by the young. In fact, when sociology first became respectable in East European countries, youth was made its prime target of research. During the late fifties, surveys of the attitudes of the young crowded each other in the general and specialized media in Poland, and the first opinion poll published as part of the new wave in Romania, in early 1965, was about youth.

The results of a number of detailed surveys of the young have been found so depressing by the Party that it has never allowed them to become known except to trusted personnel. But it has certainly acknowledge the existence of a "youth problem" throughout Eastern Europe, and has also established ministries or committees with ministry rank to deal with it. How realistically these bodies cope with the problems facing them always depends on how pragmatic the faction is that rules the Party, and what kind of men it appoints to run the youth scene. But at least they can have access to proper information. In every East European country research centers and institutes have been set up to specialize in the sociology of youth; the institute attached to the Polish Central Committee was in fact charged in July 1970 with the task of producing an annual report "on the situation among young people." I myself am very much indebted to East European sociologists who have done research in this field and have been most generous both in letting me see their results and in discussing with me their personal experiences and current ideas on the subject.

For both the Party and my own study, one fact emerging from all the research and interviewing done by others as well as myself among the youth of Eastern Europe is of cardinal importance. This is the fact that while Party propaganda in the last twenty-five years has been able to score some successes of its own, its real influence has depended all along on whether it coincided with, or tried in vain to hide or oppose, the much more powerful effect of actual social and political developments.

Paul Neuburg

A PROTEST

We, the undersigned writers and editors, wish strongly to protest the Ford Foundation's recent \$50,000 grant to the International Association for Cultural Freedom in Paris as "emergency assistance" for the publication costs of ENCOUNTER, published in England. This grant, by an organization that on many previous occasions has claimed a lack of funds for the support of American literary magazines, is grossly insulting to American editors and writers. It is also damaging to American literary magazines in putting them at a competitive disadvantage, since the grant will be used by ENCOUNTER, specifically to "seek increased circulation in the United States." We are made uneasy, as well, by the political implications of this effort to promote and expand ENCOUNTER's influence in this country.

All in all, the action seems to us short-sighted, if not faintly scandalous, and we urge the Ford Foundation and other organizations concerned with cultural endeavors in the United States to take seriously their responsibility to our literary magazines.

HANNAH ARENDT
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ARGUMENTS

THE NEW TRADITION

Obviously there's no progress in art. Progress toward what? The avant-garde is a convenient propaganda device but when it wins the war everything is avant-garde which leaves us just about where we were before. The only thing that's sure is that we move, and as we move we leave things behind—the way we felt yesterday, the way we talked about it. Form is your footprints in the sand when you look back. Art consists of the forms we leave behind in our effort to keep up with ourselves, define ourselves, create ourselves as we move along, like Malone dying or Genet in prison. Traditions, also, are after the fact. Traditions are inventions—a decision accumulates about which part of the museum is most useful to us in the ongoing present. Now and then a reorganization seems in order. We suddenly discover a kinship with Donne or Greek antiquity. Pieces are moved up from the basement and dusted off, there's a major turnover in the catalog, we “discover” Japanese art. It's hard to believe the novel has a future because, like certain women, it has the wrong kind of past. What we think of as the novel has lost its credibility—it no longer tells what we feel to be the truth as we try to keep track of ourselves. There's no point pushing ahead with fiction, we might as well write autobiography and documentary, or social criticism and other how-to books. But suppose fiction is something other than what we tend to think it is? I would like to propose the invention of a new tradition for fiction.

You can't manufacture a tradition with a whole body of work, its successes, its examples, its interconnections, its ways of thinking and proceeding. By definition it must already be there awaiting only one final element—that we say it exists. We have already had some work that talks about a new line of fiction as if it exists. Such people as Robert Scholes, Ihab Hassan, Hugh Kenner, Alain Robbe-Grillet have already digested some of this material for us, and an important new

book by Sharon Spencer talks about a very large group of modern novelists, many of them unfamiliar in this country, as if they had the coherence of a school. *Space, Time and Structure in the Modern Novel* begins with a quote from Anaïs Nin's *The Novel of the Future*: "It is a curious anomaly that we listen to jazz, we look at modern paintings, we live in modern houses of modern design, we travel in jet planes, yet we continue to read novels written in a tempo and style which is not of our time and not related to any of these influences." There is no shortage of a renewed fiction, as Spencer's book amply demonstrates, and many of its examples have already gained a wide audience. The phenomenon of which Nin speaks is no longer a "curious anomaly" — it is simply a function of the economics of the publishing industry and a lagging criticism. Given the situation, the initial virtue of the Spencer book is its choice of subject. It responds to necessity. Fiction is one of the ways we have of creating ourselves and the lives we lead. We speak of a new fictive tradition as if it exists because we need to.

The first thing that must be said about the new tradition of the novel is that it's not modern. The modern is now a period — both an era and an end of something. It implies 1939, the New York World's Fair, the Trylon and Perisphere. The modern behaved as if a new age were due tomorrow, and as if it were it, the final goal of progress. Here in tomorrowland we have a more tragic sense of things. We know there's no such thing as progress, that a new age may be a worse one, and that since the future brings no redemption, we better look to the present. In consequence the new tradition makes itself felt as a presence rather than a development. Instead of a linear sequence of historical influences it seems a network of interconnections revealed to our particular point of view. Like Eliot's view of tradition, it would resemble a reservoir rather than a highway project, a reservoir that is ahistorical, international and multilingual. Our curriculum would probably start with *Don Quixote*, in which we would note the split between the pragmatic and the fantastic, the empirical and the imaginative, the objective and the subjective, between meaning and feeling, finally, represented by Sancho and the Don. We would then use this split to illustrate the old novel's inception in a schizophrenia of the word and we would show how the realism descending from Sancho required an initial depoeticization. From here we would move to Rabelais as an example of how such dissociations in fiction can be avoided through the unity of a style that treats creation in both its senses as "all the same river." From Rabelais we might go almost anywhere — to encyclopedic multiplicity unified by wordplay in *Finnegans Wake*, or to Sterne via

a joke borrowed from Rabelais in *Tristram Shandy*. In the case of *Tristram Shandy* we would point out how the new tradition coexisted with the old tradition from the beginning, not as the exception that proves the rule but as an alternative rule. We would then proceed to articulate the new tradition through groups of similar novels without regard to period or nationality. We would talk about the qualities common to each of these types of fiction, qualities that in many cases they would share with other types within the tradition as a whole.

The Spencer book deals with one such type, in fact it creates the type — that is, the books were there (Butor, Cortázar, Nabokov, Nin, Musil, Robbe-Grillet, Gertrude Stein, Gide, many others) but the type wasn't before Spencer got hold of them. The "architectonic novel," as she calls it, is characterized by the spatialization of its form. The spatialization of form serves as an alternative to the old novel's sequential organization in plot and narrative. Through such techniques as juxtaposition and manipulation of the print on the space of the page, the novelist can create a structure which communicates by means of pattern rather than sequence in a manner approaching that of the plastic arts. This kind of writing — one immediately thinks of the prose of John Cage and Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing* — can be taken in with something like the simultaneous apprehension of someone looking at a box in a comic strip. One model for a work of fiction is the jigsaw puzzle. The picture is filled out but there is no sense of development involved. When you feel that things are happening to you without logic or sequence this is a good model to use — situations come about through a cloudburst of fragmented events that fall as they fall and finally can be seen to have assumed some kind of pattern. The sequential organizations of the old novel are coming to seem like an extravagant, if comforting, artifice — things don't appear to happen according to Aristotle any more.

A novel is both a concrete structure and an imaginative structure — pages, print, binding containing a record of the movements of a mind. The form is technological the content is imaginative. The old novel tends to deny its technological reality but, as Spencer points out with reference to Hugh Kenner, the book is "a spatial phenomenon by its very essence." A canvas is flat: a painter may wish to affirm its flatness or deny it through perspective. A writer may wish to convey an illusion, an imitation of reality, or he may wish to create a concrete structure among the other concrete structures of the world, although one which, like a piece of music, may alter our perceptions of the rest. The novel as illusion is no longer credible, so why bother (Spencer might disagree). But if we treat the novel as a concrete technological

structure there is no reason why we can't go ahead in that direction and try to improve the technological structure to suit the purposes of our imaginations. There is the example of the Frenchman, Marc Saporta, who has published a novel in a box so that its pages may be shuffled to read in various orders determined by chance. One can envision novels printed on scrolls, on globes, on moebius strips (see John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*), on billboards — or not printed at all but produced on electronic or video tape, or acted out on a stage. Beyond the frame is certainly one possible direction to go, though, as in the history of painting from cubism's "painting out" to the total displacement of the work of art into reality in the "happening," there is some indefinable line beyond which the art you are working in becomes some other art, or no art at all. Fine. Who's to say that painters can't put on plays, and if novelists want to try a little skywriting, that could be fun too. The other direction lies in acknowledgement of the nature of the medium, as in the history of American painting from Gorky to Pop Art in painting "flat," which may permit as much exploitation of the genre without the danger of departure from it. A. R. Ammons wrote his poem *Tape for the Turn of the Year* on a roll of adding machine tape but, while retaining the resultant verse form, cut up the tape and published it in the pages of a book. The consequence is an interesting tension between the vertical thrust of the tape and the consecutive pull of the pages. The book contains the tape form and accommodates it to its own. To complain that the novel can't escape from its binding, as one critic does, is like complaining that the mind can't escape from its skull.

We badly need a new way of thinking about novels that acknowledges their technological reality. We have to learn how to look at fiction as lines of print on a page and we have to ask whether it is always the best arrangement to have a solid block of print from one margin to the other running down the page from top to bottom, except for an occasional paragraph indentation. We have to learn to think about a novel as a concrete structure rather than an allegory, existing in the realm of experience rather than of discursive meaning and available to multiple interpretation or none, depending on how you feel about it — like the way that girl pressed against you in the subway. Novels are experiences to respond to, not problems to figure out, and it would be interesting if criticism could begin to expand its stock of responses to the experience of fiction.

I presume that the movement of fiction should always be in the direction of what we sense as real. Its forms are expendable. The novelist accommodates to the ongoing flow of experience, smashing any-

thing that impedes his sense of it, even if it happens to be the novel. Especially if it happens to be the novel. But it takes form to destroy form and a new form is highly noticeable. It's almost inevitable that a writer who is merely trying to get closer to his experience will at first be called self-conscious, formalistic, or literary. The kind of form employed by Laurence Sterne is, in this sense, still new to us. "Writing about writing" the critics like to sneer about this type of novel — too self-conscious. Nevertheless I'll bet that the multifaceted, antisequential, surrational *Tristram Shandy* is closer to the truth of your experience these days than *Robinson Crusoe*. Sterne's calculated demolition of the conventions of "the" novel is a thrust into reality rather than a retreat into literature. Let's do away with make-believe, we aren't children. Why suspend disbelief — is Disneyland really necessary? It's as if we have to make believe before we can work up the confidence to believe, as if belief in good conscience were the privilege of primitives or maybe Europeans. Disney, like Coleridge, found an excuse to escape statistics, but Sterne knew we never needed an excuse.

One slogan that might be drawn from Sterne's antiart technique is that, instead of reproducing the form of previous fiction, the form of the novel should seek to approximate the shape of our experience. In this respect and in many others, Diderot's ignored masterpiece, *Jacques the Fatalist*, which literally begins and ends with *Tristram Shandy*, is the direct descendant of Sterne. In its emphasis on the act of composition, among other things, Gide's *The Counterfeiters* has much in common with Sterne and Diderot on the one hand, and Genet and Beckett on the other. And of course there is Viktor Shklovsky's great novel of the Russian Revolution, *A Sentimental Journey*, translated only last year, which is as deeply indebted to Sterne as is Diderot's *Jacques*. The Russian formalist's book, in turn, has many similarities with *The Counterfeiters*, especially in its technique of "retardation," which comes to much the same thing as Gide's intentional destruction of continuity. Perhaps the fundamental assumption behind this line of fiction is that the act of composing a novel is basically not different from that of composing one's reality, which brings me back to a slogan I draw from Robbe-Grillet's criticism that the main didactic job of the contemporary novelist is to teach the reader how to invent his world. Writers like Genet, Beckett and Nabokov, especially in *Pale Fire*, move away from the pretense of imitation and representation to pure and undisguised invention.

There have to be many ways for fiction to deal with the multiplicity of experience, and still another live alternative to "the" novel might be grouped around the axis of Kleist, Kafka and Borges. If

Borges is like a Kafka without anguish, then another important but little known novelist who can be associated with this line, Raymond Roussel, is like Kafka without anything, a castle without a moat, without walls, without buildings — an absence. *The Castle* can be read as an allegory of everything, Roussel's *Impression of Africa* reads like an allegory of nothing, gratuitous inventions, puzzles solved by further puzzles, insignificance explained by what turns out to be even less significant until, as with Kafka, one is driven out of the depths back to the cryptic surface of experience that exists despite interpretation and beyond interpretation. The connection with the French "new novel" is clear, especially with Sarraute and Robbe-Grillet — Butor having moved off into the architectonic mode. With a twist of the surreal in the direction of the fantastic you arrive at Donald Barthelme, and with another twist in the direction of the psychological you come to John Hawkes. Somewhere in this area you also find Leonard Michaels, Ishmael Reed and, lately, Jonathan Baumbach, as well as Kenneth Patchen, whose *The Journal of Albion Moonlight* is another excellent book elbowed out of the way by "the" novel. Here also, and especially in connection with this line's recoil from the idea of profundity, you might run across Witold Gombrowicz, whose *Pornografia* reads like an eroticized Henry James, with all the latter's suppressed devils unchained and raging.

There are two important types of modern fiction that disappeared almost completely during the literary depression of the forties and fifties, although in this case we tend to bury them with critical lip service. "The revolution of the word," as they used to call the Paris experiments of Joyce, Stein and the Surrealists, is probably still the crucial element in a renewed fiction, and the one least reckoned with by contemporary novelists. The reason it is crucial is that it deals with the nature of language itself, and any art, after all the other things it may be about, is fundamentally about its medium. Both the impossibly overloaded punning in *Finnegans Wake*, and the impossibly opaque wordplay in Stein's *Tender Buttons*, raise the question of whether it is really the pragmatic, discursive, rationally intelligible side of language that best puts us in touch with our experience of the world and of ourselves. All writers are in love with nonsense as the water in which everyone swims, and Rimbaud's desperate assertions as well as Mallarmé's desperate negations are the extreme strategies of lovers attempting union with our native element. John Ashbery wrote recently that there are two ways of going about things: one is to put everything in and the other is to leave everything out. Joyce tends to put everything in and Gertrude Stein tends to leave everything out and they

both arrive at enigma. The only way to confront an enigma is to leave behind what you know in the hope of discovering something that you don't — understanding requires a release from understanding.

The other important line that was almost completely submerged during the counterrevolution of the oldfangled is that descending from D. H. Lawrence through Henry Miller and Anaïs Nin. After Lawrence's first impact as a sexual iconoclast it came to be recognized that his real subject was the crisis of the modern psyche and I believe the same shift is due to come about with respect to Miller's reputation. These writers are primarily psychological novelists. I think of their books as wisdom books, more analogous to *Job* or *Ecclesiastes* than to what we ordinarily think of as fiction, and of course Lawrence consciously made use of the gospel form. People read such books to find out how they should live their lives, and they are often very popular with the young, who presumably need most to find out. Hesse and Brautigan, for example, are also more or less in this line. The books of Carlos Castaneda, which though not novels have the texture and style of fiction, quite specifically transmit the wisdom of Castaneda's teacher, the medicine man Don Juan. They remind me of Hassidic and Sufic teaching stories, but unfold with the advantage of the novel's sophisticated techniques for rendering experience. The recent popularity of the autobiographical form may be attributed partly to the need for such books — as well as to the general voracious and often misguided appetite for facts — though the quality of recent autobiography (as well as of the "documentary novel") seems to depend on what kind of novel it happens to be imitating. Nin's *Diaries*, on the other hand, seem to be a counterpart to and a completion of her novels, and may in fact be her best novel.

One could go on to speak of other alternatives — the revitalization of narrative in the exuberant inventions of writers like John Barth and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, or the work of the mythmakers and fairytalers like William Gass and Robert Coover. Such types are approximate and arbitrary anyway, though one's need to define them from a particular point of view is not. I prefer instead to cut the pie another way, and make note of a new thing that has recently been spotted from my observation post in California, where I and my students in the M.F.A. program in writing at the university where I taught awhile were suddenly struck by many similarities in the fiction we were writing, in the fiction that was being submitted in applications from all over the country, and in certain writers of growing reputation. This new thing is a style that we have come to call the Bossa Nova, an elaboration of the new tradition. Needless to say the Bossa

Nova has no plot, no story, no character, no chronological sequence, no verisimilitude, no imitation, no allegory, no symbolism, no subject matter, no "meaning." It resists interpretation: as with Kafka's fiction, you can explain it and explain it but it won't go away. The Bossa Nova is nonrepresentational—it represents itself. Its main qualities are abstraction, improvisation and opacity. The degree of abstraction may be great, as in Donald Barthelme, a writer who is very bossanova, or it may be slight as in Douglas Woolf, whose fiction seems to hover a fraction of an inch above the level of common experience, just enough to show that no experience is ever common. Woolf, who is in other respects not very bossanova, is nevertheless different enough to have been shouldered aside by "the" novel—or is it just that we can't tolerate anything serious in fiction unless it's dull or comes from Europe. His *Wall to Wall* and especially *Fade Out*, which is a kind of geriatric *Huckleberry Finn*, should be enough to get him generally recognized as one of the best writers going.

The best contemporary example of improvisational style that I know is the fiction of Steve Katz, a leading Bossanovan, who writes like a seal with the ball continually about to fall off its nose. He is a surfer on the wave of chaos and the closest thing to Rabelais since Rabelais, but try to find a man in the street who has read *The Exaggerations of Peter Prince* or *Creamy and Delicious* and you will probably be taking a long walk. As abstraction frees fiction from the representational and the need to imitate some version of reality other than its own, so improvisation liberates it from any a priori order and allows it to discover new sequences and interconnections in the flow of experience. In a situation where traditional patterns of order seem false or superfluous it may be better to open oneself as completely as possible to the immediacy of experience and allow, in William Carlos Williams's phrase, "nothing that is not green." One way of doing this is through collage, which in fact Williams uses extensively in *Paterson*, and which Paul Metcalf, a descendant of Melville, puts to similar use in a fascinating and forgotten novel published in 1965 called *Genoa*, and in *Patagoni*, published last year.

Rudolph Wurlitzer is a writer whose work gets very close to the quality that I have in mind when I speak of opacity. His novels have the interesting effect of passing through your mind the way ice cream passes over your tongue—you get the taste and that's it. The experience exists in and for itself. It is opaque the way that abstract painting is opaque in that it cannot be explained as representing some other kind of experience. You cannot look through it to reality—it is the reality in question and if you don't see it you don't see anything

at all. This quality, which is perhaps most brilliantly managed in Eugene Wildman's work and some of Barthelme's stories, is a good antidote for that way we have of fending off experience by explaining it. Opacity implies that we should direct our attention to the surface of a work, and such techniques as graphics and typographical variation, in calling the reader's attention to the technological reality of the book, are useful in keeping his mind on that surface instead of undermining it with profundities. The truth of the page is on top of it, not underneath or over at the library.

Admittedly the Bossa Nova is nothing but a hopeful fabrication. In fact the whole paradoxical idea of a "new tradition" for fiction is a mere product of the imagination. Still who knows but that one day you may look up to find that a writer as peculiar as Jerzy Kosinski has won the National Book Award, or that Richard Brautigan's far-out fables have become best sellers, or even that such esoteric artists as Beckett and Agnon have been awarded the Nobel Prize, and you may begin to wonder if something is happening Mr. Jones.

Ronald Sukenick

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ON TROTSKY AND EVERYTHING ELSE

TROTSKY, THE GREAT DEBATE RENEWED. Ed. Nicolas Krassó; Introd. by David Horowitz. New Critics Press. \$8.95.

Let us summarize crudely and briefly the bulk of the debate. Mr. Krassó thinks that Trotsky underestimated the autonomy of parties and political structures distinct from social classes — unlike Lenin, who neither underestimated nor overestimated anything, but estimated everything properly. Mr. Mandel maintains, on the contrary, that Trotsky neither underestimated nor overestimated anything but — not unlike Lenin — estimated everything properly. Mr. Krassó thinks that Mr. Mandel's arguments are un-Marxist. Mr. Mandel thinks that Mr. Krassó's arguments are un-Marxist. Mr. Johnstone states that Trotsky was wrong in denying that socialism may be built in one isolated country since Stalin effectively built it, though in quite an ungentle manner.

I find this discussion somewhat sectarian and somewhat boring. I will try to explain what I mean by "sectarian" without trying to explain, however, what I mean by "boring" (I am aware that the disputants probably would say that "boring" is an un-Marxist category, and probably they would be right).

Let us now summarize less crudely and less briefly. According to Mr. Krassó, Trotsky, throughout his political career, had never understood that political bodies — in particular the Party — are specific social entities which cannot either replace social classes or be identical to them. This, Krassó says, is what explains all Trotsky's political blunders, including his ultimate defeat. Before the Revolution of 1905, Trotsky shifted from the military concept of the party to its opposite, the party as coextensive with the working class. Both concepts, however, run against Lenin's theory and both show the same failure to understand the relation between party and class "correctly." There is no party in Trotsky's analysis of the first Russian revolution and Trotsky was himself a nonparty revolutionary up to 1917; in anticipating the revolutionary upheaval he ignored specific functions of the party organization. According to Krassó the fallacy of "sociologism" led him to reduce

all political conflicts directly to the class struggle without the intermediary of organized structures. After joining the Bolsheviks in 1917, where he was always regarded as an alien by Party leaders, he kept repeating the same error. He opposed the control of the army by political commissars during the civil war, and later he proposed to solve economic difficulties with military means, including forced labor. As a result of his neglect of the role of the Party he turned the whole Bolshevik Old Guard against himself; he did not notice Stalin's growing importance as Party secretary and he was unable to form a block of Left and Right in order to prevent Stalin from concentrating the full power in his hands. This was because he believed that all, even the least significant quarrels and tensions within the Party must directly reflect class conflicts. And, Krassó continues, the theory of permanent revolution is based on the same error. Since Trotsky's concern was the global struggle of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, he saw the forthcoming revolution in the West, but not the victory of the proletariat in an isolated Russia with overwhelming peasant population, and he expected that capitalist countries must all unite against the Soviet Union. Stalin, who gave up any hope for the European revolution, turned out to be more sober. Too late, in exile, Trotsky admitted his mistake and tried to imitate Lenin's success by founding a new International. And he failed again.

Everything is false in this picture, Mr. Mandel replies. He admits that before 1917 Trotsky rejected Lenin's theory of party, but balanced Lenin's error in not foreseeing the socialist perspective of the coming Russian revolution. Both corrected their respective errors in 1917 and from that moment on they collaborated in full harmony—theoretical and tactical. Trotsky's writing after 1917 stressed the crucial role of the party that is defined both by its correct program and the ability to win the majority of the proletariat. It was Stalin, not Trotsky, who believed in pure power politics carried through by the political apparatus as an (apparently) independent body. The ultimate victory of Stalin is explained by the failure of other leaders to notice early the danger of bureaucracy as a new social force. "Trotsky fought in order to have the party act as a brake upon the process of bureaucratic degeneration, as Lenin called upon him to do." It was not error to predict other revolutionary movements in the foreseeable future. Mandel argues that revolutionary situations arose many times after October: in Germany in 1918–19, in 1920, in 1923; in Spain in 1931, 1934, 1936–37; in Italy in 1920, 1945, 1948; in France in 1936, 1944–47. Trotsky wanted the Communist movement to be prepared for these and similar situations and to turn revolutionary possibilities into reality. The fact that Communist movements failed to do so and consequently that no rev-

olution emerged from these revolutionary situations does not prove Trotsky's error, since this very fact is precisely due to the communists' failure to accept Trotsky's strategy, a failure resulting from Stalin's policy which reflected the specific interest of Soviet bureaucracy (not a class — as Trotsky pointed out — but a privileged layer with conservative vested interests).

Mr. Krassó replies, in his turn, that Trotsky never learned Lenin's lesson and that he joined the Bolsheviks not because he changed his mind about the theory of the party, but because of their insurrectional orientation in 1917. His attempts to imitate Lenin in the thirties were a voluntarist caricature. Krassó repeats that an alliance of the Right and the Left in 1923 could have overthrown Stalin's power, but such an alliance was impracticable because Trotsky had such a bad reputation among the old leaders. And Trotsky — because of his sociologism — was incapable of understanding that the Party was the only living political force after the civil war. His inability to grasp the situation in terms of relatively autonomous political structures led him to believe that the Soviet Union was bound to collapse unless saved by the revolution in the West. This is why he had no real industrial and agricultural programs. Neither was he able — since he conceived of international conflicts only in terms of the class struggle — to understand national realities and to admit the relative justice of one side in the wars between capitalist countries; he saw the Second World War in patterns of the First and he wrote in 1940 that "we support neither the camp of the allies nor the camp of Germany." He wrongly dismissed the possibility of revolution led by Comintern parties and he expected the awakening of the revolutionary forces among the American working class.

Mr. Mandel replies again. Krassó, he says, "objectively slanders Trotsky as well as Lenin," when he opposes Trotsky's fetishization of Party program to Lenin's stress on the Party structure. There were no differences between them after March 1917. Trotsky's industrial and agricultural program in 1923–24 was correct and realistic. Krassó's mistakes result from his inability to understand the emergence of Soviet bureaucracy as an autonomous social stratum. Both Lenin and Trotsky understood perfectly the dangers of bureaucratism. Trotsky did not suggest that collapse of the Soviet Union was inevitable without world revolution in advocating a policy which would have favored that revolution. Again — revolutionary situations arose effectively in many countries but Comintern's policy failed to exploit them. And in founding the Fourth International, Trotsky was again expressing his well-justified trust in the revolutionary future. The Fourth International "is living Leninism today."

The next reply to Mandel's eulogy is by Mr. Johnstone. He quotes

many of Trotsky's utterances at length to show that Trotsky from 1906 to 1937 had consistently repeated one idea: without the revolution in the advanced countries, proletarian power in Russia is doomed to collapse. But the author explains Trotsky's mistakes not by his failure to grasp autonomous functions of political structures but by his "underestimation of the internal forces of Russian socialism." Trotsky expected the challenge of foreign commodities on the Soviet market — wrongly, since Stalin "correctly" established the state monopoly of the foreign trade. The success of the Five Year Plans demonstrated Trotsky's mistakes. Stalin proved effectively that socialism may be built in an isolated country, although not yet its higher stage, not as a society without state, money and commodities. This success did not run against Lenin's predictions since Lenin himself departed from traditional Bolshevik tenets in his last writings on this crucial point. Stalin was "correct" when he proclaimed in 1935 that the socialism has already been built in the main and the class antagonism has been abolished, and although Mr. Johnstone does not deny that this achievement was carried through in a rather undemocratic manner he blames Trotsky for not having understood that "for a certain period (which may be quite prolonged) an uneasy and antagonistic coexistence of a socialist economy and an undemocratic, unsocialist superstructure is possible." Let us not worry: the imperfect superstructure will soon match up the perfect economic basis. And Trotsky again was wrong when predicting the return of the Soviet state to bourgeois principles. Nothing of the sort happened and since Stalin's death "the most negative features of Stalinism spotlighted by Trotsky have been dismantled."

I think the debate is sectarian and not historical because all the disputants argue each with other about which policy was "correct" in a given moment in Russia. They do not explain what "correct" means but certainly it is not synonymous with "efficient" or "successful." These last terms deal with the relation between ends and means, they do not involve any value judgments or commitment; we may ask about the efficiency of the policy of Hitler in 1932 in the same way as we ask about Lenin's policy in 1917; but probably the participants in the debate would not talk about "correctness" in the first case. When they say that in a certain situation Trotsky's (or Stalin's) conduct was "correct" or "mistaken," they mean that they praise or blame him from the standpoint of aims they share. They act as if they are giving advice to Trotsky in 1923 or to Stalin in 1929. Consequently, no one can participate in the discussion who does not share their value judgments and ideological allegiances. But allegiances are not clearly articulated and words like "correct" blur the fact that the proper aim of the discussion is not to understand the events or the motives of historical figures but

to wake in the reader the feeling of identity with some of them. The disputants take for granted that there is one "objectively correct" concept of socialism and that whatever the circumstances, the social and human costs, state ownership of the industry and the land is the basic (though not exhaustive) content of this concept. Therefore, not only do they not question the socialist character of the Soviet society but they seem to agree that nothing in the world is more important than the defense of this system of ownership, the most precious treasure of mankind. To say nothing of Mr. Johnstone, who mostly repeats the Soviet state catechism, both Mr. Krassó and Mr. Mandel subordinate their thinking to that fundamental opposition: the utterly corrupted and utterly irreformable capitalism versus socialism that is not yet perfect and still suffers bureaucratic distortion but represents today, because of the state monopoly of ownership, the highest achievement of humanity. Certainly, whoever believes that in respect to this opposition all other circumstances are secondary may take perfect comfort in the awareness that he does not properly deny the realities of Soviet past and present — several dozen millions of victims, universal slavery, ruthless exploitation of the working society, imperial foreign policy, national oppression, glaring inequalities, cultural devastation — but he still considers these realities as regrettable mistakes or historical necessities which do not affect the "essence." The only question is: on which reasons are we to accept this hierarchy of values?

The reader feels a certain relief in studying the last chapter of the book, Mr. C. J. Arthur's "The Coming Soviet Revolution." The author is criticizing the idea expounded by Trotsky in *The Revolution Betrayed* (and accepted since in the Trotsky movement) that the Soviet society cannot get rid of its bureaucratic degeneration without a revolution, but a "political," not a "social," revolution, since the socialist basis of the society, i.e., nationalized property, remains intact despite the parasitic bureaucracy's political power. The author attacks (rightly, I think) this artificial distinction between political and social revolution. He argues that the political expropriation of the ruling apparatus would mean not only the abolishment of the existing system of material privileges but a change in the relation of production as well, because "the social character of production in the Soviet Union imposes fetters on the most important productive force of all, the initiative and creativity of the worker himself. The completely hierarchical command structure of the Soviet economy makes the individual worker the same kind of labor-power machine and nothing more than he is in a capitalist factory" (except, it should be added, that in the capitalist factory the worker has the right of strike, the right of association, the freedom of speech, the right of demanding participation in the man-

agement and so on). The author criticizes the traditional Trotskyist concept which lays the blame for the postrevolutionary degeneration upon exceptional circumstances, in particular the backwardness of Russia and her isolation. He points out that the very revolutionary process, with its inevitable subsequent exhaustion, lays the ground for the seizure of power by an apparatus which step by step manages to free itself from the control of the class it is supposed to represent. To think about historical development in terms of class division only and consequently to imagine that with the abolition of private property, social conflicts and alienation will naturally disappear (except for extraordinary circumstances) means, according to the author, to abandon the proper content of the Marxian notion of socialism as defined by the free creativity of all individuals making up the society.

Neither is Trotsky's concept of "Bonapartism" as applied to Stalin's regime defensible, Mr. Arthur goes on, since Bonapartism, historically speaking, is a phenomenon resulting from a stalemate in a sharp class struggle giving a temporary autonomy to the political apparatus; no similar schema is applicable to the rise of the Soviet bureaucracy as an independent power. Still, the author argues, the new bureaucratic system cannot be simply identified with the capitalist restoration; it is an entirely new form, unparalleled by any past structure. He recalls Michaels's law of oligarchy—the classless society is in principle unthinkable—but he believes that the emergence of new oligarchies from any revolutionary movement is only a constant danger, not an iron necessity. About the class character of ruling groups in Soviet-type societies the author thinks that, in spite of their estrangement from the society, these groups are less class-structured than owner classes in the capitalist world because the relation between a person and his social position is less rigid (no inheritance of privileges; no institutionalized ties between personal and social functions). Thus Mr. Arthur believes that the Soviet Union, its primitive character notwithstanding, "is a crucial step beyond capitalism and is still worth defending." The distinction between rulers and ruled there is not as sharply structured as the distinction between propertied classes and the proletariat in capitalist societies. Therefore we have to do with a transitional regime, "in which the program of socialist revolution remains the consciousness of the masses" and which awaits the new proletarian revolution.

It may be noted that the author, though he does not share some traditional Trotskyist dogmas, is still deducing his description of existing socialist societies from an a priori Marxist schema rather than from an empirical knowledge. I do not argue against his criticism of the theory which simply interprets these societies as a kind of capitalist

restoration. They must certainly be grasped as a new phenomenon, not to be assimilated with any past form. But how does he know that this is a "transitory" society on the path toward a "genuine" socialism? Since he refers to the early Marxian notion of socialism he cannot fail to notice that, measured with these criteria, the existing "socialist" slavery is more remote from the Marxian utopia (labor as self-expression; free creativity of all; self-management of the society, etc.) than any bourgeois democracy. To say that individuals of privileged strata do not derive their position from their previous individual property and that therefore the class division is less sharp is not a convincing argument, since this is what may be said about the bureaucracies of old oriental satrapies: the position of subordinated members of the oppressive apparatus depended rather on the whims of their superiors, not on their property. One wonders what is peculiarly socialist (or "more socialist") in this system. And what historical law assures us that the "real" socialism and the "real" workers' power will emerge from this regime? How does the author know that the revolutionary socialist idea dominates the mass consciousness in so-called socialist countries, since all the evidence shows that the real forces of disintegration in those countries come from national consciousness, material demands, liberal claims and Western models? (I am not saying that I am happy about this; I am saying that this is what happens to be.) To answer to this that people have the "false consciousness" is only to give opportunity to more unsolvable questions: who decides about the distinction between false and "correct" consciousness, and on what basis? Who is in the enviable position of having a guarantee that his own consciousness is not false? And why should it be certain or even likely that the "correct" consciousness — as conceived in the mind of a prophet or a leader — is ultimately bound to prevail? I do not find good answers to these questions.

I am certainly simplifying, but not distorting, the content of this book when I say that it supplies us with good examples of four basic variants of Marxist dogmatism: the Stalinist (Mr. Johnstone), the Trotskyist (Mr. Mandel), the Leninist (Mr. Krassó) and the Marxian proper (Mr. Arthur). Consequently, all disputants share a certain common stock of beliefs which, they think, are so obviously true that no further inquiry is needed. This is what makes their discussion less exciting to less pious minds.

Leszek Kolakowski

THE DISPOSSESSED

THE TENANTS. By Bernard Malamud. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. \$6.95.

HARRY LESSER TAKES THE TWENTY-THIRD

*God is my landlord,
I mainly want.
He leads me to lie down in grim postures,
For the most part alone.
So I walk through these alleys
In the shadow of debt
And fear the good even more than the evil.
My rod comforts a little,
Though not really that much.
Once in a purim somebody prepares me a meal
I myself wouldn't serve a worst enemy.
Surly noodniks sans mercy
Follow me all the days of my life,
Yet God forbid I should maybe move.
Probably I'll hang on in this lousy house
For ever.*

Once before a time, goes a pre-Malamud story, Prometheus stole fire from heaven for men, which mightily angered the gods, fire's sole owners up to that point. They grabbed Prometheus, chained him to a rock, and set birds to eating at his renewable liver for ever. Meanwhile, of course, man had the fire.

In time, as everyone knows, the gods themselves stole out of heaven, and left in their wake nothing but endless, undifferentiated, boring space. Einstein, however, saw it another way. *He* looked up into those vacant heavens and saw *light*. Now light might have served anyone not familiar with what the heavens were like when they were full of real fire. Light wouldn't do for one follower of the old departed gods, a palish priest, Eli Ot.

"Einstein, Shmeinstein," Eli Ot is reported to have said, "he's nothing but a skyintist and what skyintist can have disinterested opinions about the sky?" "Right," agreed Ez Ra, a pale godsman of dubious Chinese and Egyptian derivation. "Light is not fire," said Ez Ra, and with this nix Eli Ot energetically agreed. "Neither light nor fire is such a hot idea," Eli Ot added. "Any young man with a swan song in his heart should hide out from *both* fire and light. The best place for hiding is a bank, or perhaps some other vaulted institution."

Almost instantly there sprang up an almost infinite number of vaulted institutions filled with as many Eli Otics and Ez Raniks as medieval divines found angels on the head of a secular pin. Their institutional anthems were variously titled "Fire is dead" or "Light is gone," and, quite miraculously and inexplicably, whenever they spoke a thick gray smoke issued above their heads like a reversed black tornado — smoke, that is, totally independent of any fire! This smoke hid Prometheus, it hid those punishing birds, it even hid the fire most men forgot was still there among them.

But in the middle of these smokemakers and smokebearers lived an Isaiah or two, several Jeremiahs and Ezekiels, a Philip, a Ralph, and this one Bernard I've decided to tell you about. They stood on mountaintops and rooftops, on broad avenues, pointing: "Hey, look," they shouted, "of course there's no fire in heaven. Fire lives among us on these streets!"

None of the smokepeople listened.

Living in banks, and those other vaulted institutions, Eli Ot's men and women had simply ceased relying on their own ears or their own eyes.

But the smoke didn't stay in those institutions only. It solidified, broke apart, fell into monotype letters numerous as the grains of sand in the desert. Smoke became a language, a style, and passed down the hierarchy to a fate Eli Ot had never quite imagined. Smoketalk spiraled up out of lecture halls, hitched rides on radio waves, bounced off satellites, settled in a peculiarly thick pall in one spot now called the Smoke House, whose resident company, *Die Drei Kameraden Und Freunde*, became smoke's grandest converts. Their best smoketalk invention was a nearly independent kewpiedoll they named the Melvin Laird, whose slightly crossed kewpiedoll eyes seemed to interdict each other, his head precipitately balding, his lip motions preemptive, simulating cartoon synchronization as they suggested held-open options and the ultimate form of political reaction known in smoketalk as "protective." *Die Drei Kameraden*, also known as Herbert Zieglerdiensterlichkleinhaldemann, relied on their intermedia men, also known as Howard K. Chancellor Cronkite, to demonstrate the absence of both light and fire. Smoketalk thrived. Its power of containment was celebrated by not one but two Bundys, and its potential brought to perfection by another well-known Washington couple, the Rostows. Eli Ot's and Ez Ra's success was obvious everywhere, especially in those walled institutions echoing with smokewords like "fictive," "authorial," "feisty," "ambience."

So now, of course, you want to know what all this has to do with the Bernard I'm going to tell you about. My answer is *everything* — OK? I've already suggested the company this Bernard — Malamud — keeps. I'll say more: this Malamud knows man has the Promethean fire in his streets — not that, in the end, it makes all that much difference.

In Malamud's new novel, *The Tenants*, the steel demolition ball is swinging. Wall after wall is staved in, roofs collapse, all the uncertainties of urban civilization are reduced to the chaos of dust and rubble. The hero of this book — to begin with — is a novelist, Harry Lesser, crazy to finish his novel while, all around him, demolition triumphs. But Malamud's novel is *not* about a "last man" who heroically resists the dehumanization of urban developers setting up another Babel Towers. Lesser's resistance is a side effect of his writer's fix: Lesser is so busy dragassing his manuscript through a thousand visions and revisions he hardly has time to take a bagel and tea, let alone become a big Prometheus hero resisting landlord Irving Levenspiel, the big-shot developer. Harry has on his mind only how to finish a novel, or, if not finish it, at least how to end it. And dragassing through his dragassing are all kinds of thoughts about art and life.

But *danken Gott*, as Sholom Aleichem taught us to say to cover up montage and transitions, into Harry's dust-and-rubble chaos comes Bill Spear, Willie Spearmint his real name, a squatter in Levenspiel's building, a writer like Lesser with Lesser's own kind of urgency about finishing his book, and this Willie, a black, and a militant, catches the fire off the streets for Malamud's novel. This Willie does for *The Tenants*, and for American fiction, what Kareem Abdul-Jabbar has done for professional basketball, and what Willie Mays, Mohammed Ali, Duane Thomas, Tina Turner, Shirley Chisholm, Wilson Pickett, and Angela Davis — to mention an obvious few — have done to save various graysmoke Establishment enterprises from death by infra-inhalation or instant entropy. The allegorical confrontations of Lesser's and Spearmint's *styles* is brilliantly dramatized by Malamud, first by having Lesser's smoketalk indirectly and firelessly analytical, following it immediately with Spearmint's response, in a human voice, direct, with the rhythm of street language, fire's remnant. First Lesser:

Part of Bill's trouble was that he was trying to foreshadow a revolutionary mentality, and it didn't always fit. Partly he was attempting in his fiction to shed an incubus — his former life. This was not necessarily bad in itself but could be bad if he insisted, and he was insisting. . . .

To which Willie responds:

"Lesser, you trying to fuck up my mind and confuse me. I read all about that formalism jazz in the library and it's bullshit. You trying to kill off my natural writin by pretendin you are interested in the fuckn form of it though the truth of it is you afraid of what I am goin to write in my book, which is that the blacks have to murder you white MF's for crippin our lives."

It's as stark as, say, a debate between Irving Kristol and a ragged member of a South Bronx street gang. And Malamud goes further. While threatening Lesser's, Spearmint saves the novel's life, and, more to the point, the *quality* of Lesser's language — spoken or written — and the quality of Lesser's day-to-day life. Through Spearmint Lesser "learns" that black women may have the same trouble coming our mythology associates only with stiffassed Wasps and Jewish girls made rigid frigid — so the story goes — by their Wasp-aspiring mothers; equally reassuring is his discovery, again through Spearmint, that he can, like a good American free-enterpriser, *compete* with the black buck stud who mythology says has and does it all.

But Malamud's Lesser-Spearmint clash shouldn't be confused with Mailer's fantasy-at-play bug-out on the black-white confrontation in *An American Dream*. The essence of Spearmint's anger is that what is lost today must be revenged tomorrow, that the buildup of hate is not going to be dispersed *this* time by a bit of bluster, a weave, a crouch, a gurgle, a softshoe routine. In the midst of the Harry and Willie dialogue is a relentless movement toward the inevitable end. It starts with Willie refusing to buy not only formalism but art itself: "Art my ass," Willie says, "in this world it's heart that counts." Stalking Lesser further he rejects the seeming resolution of Malamud's *The Assistant*, a ritual circumcision just literary enough to cover up the complexities of a Jew-Goy impasse: "Lesser," says Willie, "I know what you talkin about, don't think I don't. I know you trying to steal my manhood. I don't go for that circumcise shmuck stuff." This civilization's end is probably foreseen here: we'll all end up dying of one another's machismo.

The Tenants is not Malamud's first tuning to the cry in the streets. He, more than any other American novelist, has had the courage and imagination to snatch significant myths out of the least likely spaces. Baseball was Malamud's first existential field (in *The Natural*); something as corny as an *Abie's Irish Rose* situation was turned into something else in *The Assistant*. Malamud's compassionate eye has seen significant human experience even in the old jokes of Jewish life — the *shadchan* trying to dump the less-than-pretty girl ("The Magic Barrel"); or the old jokes of academic life (S. Levin in *A New Life* comes

to class with his fly open and — yawn widely — has this girl student offer him a first-person fornicative if only he'll up her grade). Yet this same Seymour Levin is a reforming drunk who literally pulled himself back to life from out of a deep dark cellar. He, like most of Malamud's loser-heroes, lives in hope that somewhere, somehow, somebody will be his way up or his way out, that the very next thing that happens may well be his *t'shuvah*. In *The Tenants* Willie Spearmint is, indeed, Harry Lesser's existential turning, but the *t'shuvah* comes too late in a world that turned into sidelines while hate and ugliness captured the existential arena. Mailer in his dingy days may have thought a joust in Central Park under modified medieval rules would drain the excesses of youthful id and send warriors home to their rats and roaches and sty-shit healthier and happier. We of the middle classes have always been big on happy endings. The *t'shuvah* of Malamud's fiction is on quite another level, and terrifying: *The Assistant* ends in a tie — Jews 0, Goyim 0. *A New Life* ends with S[isypus]. Levin trying to push up once more that well-worn boulder. But the real connection to *The Tenants* is to be found in *The Fixer*, Malamud's relentless look at the *shtetl*, hatred of Jews, power, and pogroms. *The Fixer* ends starkly with no way out for the falsely accused Yakov Bok, though he is allowed the fantasy of shooting the criminally deficient Czar. Before he does so he says what Malamud characters say throughout Malamud's fiction: that nothing is *made* by a man suffering. "Excuse me, Your Majesty," Yakov imagines himself telling the Czar, "but what suffering has taught me is the uselessness of suffering." Just before his own death Yakov allows himself one unconsoling thought, that "there's no such thing as an unpolitical man, especially a Jew. . . . You can't sit still and see yourself destroyed." As for the Czar, Yakov says before pulling the trigger, "you've made out of this country a valley of bones. You had your chances and pissed them away."

This archetype confrontation recurs in *The Tenants*, but it is Willie Spearmint and his black experience that takes the place of Yakov Bok. And being a Jew no longer exempts Harry Lesser, in Willie's eyes, from being totally identified with the "white MF's" who pissed away their chances and made America "a valley of bones." And just as there is no resolution in the deaths of Yakov and the Czar so there's none in the imaginary apocalypse that terminates *The Tenants*. That apocalypse is not any gentler for the jungle movie backdrop Malamud provides Lesser and Spearmint; nor is it modified by their existential bang being followed by Levenspiel's anticlimactic whimper.

One night Willie and Lesser met in a grassy clearing in the bush. The night was moonless above the moss-dripping, rope-entwined

trees. Neither of them could see the other but sensed where he stood. Each heard him scarcely breathing.

"Bloodsuckin Jew Niggerhater."

"Anti-Semitic Ape."

Their metal glinted in hidden light, perhaps starlight filtering greenly through dense trees. Willie's eyeglass frames momentarily gleamed. They aimed at each other accurate blows. Lesser felt his jagged ax sink through bone and brain as the groaning black's razor-sharp saber, in a single boiling stabbing slash, cut the white's balls from the rest of him.

Each, thought the writer, feels the anguish of the other.

THE END

O

Mercy, the both of you, for Christ's sake, Levenspiel cries. Hab rachmones, I beg you. Mercy on me. Mercy mercy mercy mercy mercy mercy mercy mercy. . . .

Levenspiel is the irrelevant third force in the archetype triangle, taking the place of those Jews at the end of *The Fixer* who see Yakov Bok's carriage rattle doomwards through the streets and fall to "openly weeping, wringing their hands. One thinly bearded man clawed his face. One or two waved at Yakov. Someone shouted his name."

Levenspiel's too is the cry from off the streets, but it saves nothing else, only a novel's art; ritual death solves nothing, though it finally gives Harry Lesser a way to complete his novel. Before his death his fountain pen "made lines but no words." The imagined apocalypse provides the terminal words, and no human compensation.

There's not even a Czar to blame now. Nor is it enough to blame Sophie Ginsky or LBJ or Philip Roth's latest Jewish mother, Richard Nixon, the Ur-Wasp. All of Bellow's quavering fingerpointing victims have, like kids playing cops and robbers, cried "bang" and dropped, playacting the mortally wounded for the last time. Take away the romance and the religious overtones and you have the irony of Faulknerian communion best represented in the whipping of the child Joe Christmas by McEachern (that is, son of Each or Everyman) in *Light in August*:

He [Joe] was looking straight ahead, with a rapt, calm expression like a monk in a picture. McEachern began to strike methodically, with slow and deliberate force, still without heat or anger. It would have been hard to say which face was the more rapt, more calm, more convinced.

How many light-years has Malamud seen fall between *Pictures of Fidelman* and *The Tenants*? That brilliant comic *Pictures of Fidelman* seems to come from another planet, and to be addressed to still another, much more hopeful and indulgent universe. Fidelman belongs in the magic barrel, where one can dream of women with big tits and warming soulful embraces, but settle for, alas, women with pigeonchest and hobbling gait; or, on yet another pitch, try to be an artist in Rome, and end up a prisoner of not artists but art forgers, and finally learn the craft of glassblowing from a man who really *knows* blowing, Beppo, whose wife stoically accepts the extremes of human ambiguity. "Beppo may be a homo," she tells ex-lover Fidelman, "but he's a good provider and not a bad father. . . . Occasionally he will throw me a lay if I suck him up good beforehand. It isn't a perfect life but I've learned to be satisfied." Which is no more and no less than Fidelman himself can claim in the last words of the novel: "In America he worked as a craftsman in glass and loved men and women."

The Tenants ends like the ultimate Beckett play, with the stage bare, and only the voice of Levenspiel crying "mercy." Not only has suffering made nothing, but understanding, compassion, are similarly pointless. The *t'shuvah* has meaning only when the new way has a tomorrow. The King of Nineveh changed his life at the very last instant. Lesser's and Spearmint's realization is just that second too late to spring hope or fire off the now muted streets. Reality, Malamud is saying, may be even grimmer than art has up to this time imagined.

Jack Ludwig

AMERICA'S LOWELL

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MYTH OF ROBERT LOWELL. By Philip Cooper. University of North Carolina Press. \$7.50.

THE PUBLIC POETRY OF ROBERT LOWELL. By Patrick Cosgrave. Gollancz, London. £ 1.

THE REVIEW, Numbers 27-28. Edited by Ian Hamilton, from 11 Greek Street, London, W.1. 75 p.

All great American literary reputations are *contested* reputations, both during and after the writer's lifetime. The contesters are often equally great and equally contested American reputations: one thinks, for instance, of the young Henry James's splendidly vigorous death dance over what he thought was the corpse of Whitman. English reputations, on the other hand, once early established, continue to "exist" in the ironical sense which J. L. Austin thought that many people uncritically

give to "exist": a sort of unobserved continuing activity, a quiet "meta-physical ticking over." Lowell, certainly the most vigorously and variously resourceful of living American poets of his generation, a poet of brute or angelic intelligence, of almost unbelievable verbal and scholarly resource, taking, recently, every conceivable risk of a crash if he can keep the car on the road, is eminently contestable.

Strangely, a lot of the contestation has recently come not from America but from England, where Lowell has recently settled. *The Review* is the best, the sharpest magazine of, and about, new poetry we have had in England since Geoffrey Grigson's *New Verse*: it is a sign of the change of the times since the mid-1930s that *New Verse* was mostly poems with some short, often slashing reviews, whereas *The Review* is mostly reviews and articles (often severe, but not pursuing severity solely for its own sake) and *some* poems.

There have been earlier numbers than the one cited above in which Lowell got a lot of attention: a wonderful slanting and glancing tape-recorded interview with Lowell himself; an interview with Geoffrey Grigson, who, as a critic, is a bit like Robert Graves's ideal reader, "any good housewife," with a nose in the market, the old-fashioned open stall market of England and Europe, for apples and fish, for the fresh and the firm, as against the bruised and the stale — Grigson, so to say, like that housewife, had fingered and sniffed Lowell frequently, but never felt he wanted to *buy* him; and a fine thoughtful critical piece by John Bayley (a deep, ranging, and sensitive critic, known of, unfairly, by too many readers mainly as Iris Murdoch's husband) about the *Notebooks*, in which he felt that many of these sonnets were like a rather ruthless mulching down and crushing and mechanically reshaping of old poems, as if they might be old automobiles. Nobody has said in so many words, "Lowell took us in!" But there is, in England at least, a nagging, questioning mood. It might be envy, partly. There doesn't seem to be a living English poet, of just that generation (not even Larkin, much as Lowell himself admires him), with a similar range of experience (from historical to hysterical) or readiness of rhetorical resource.

Yet points are made that are valid. Here, from the most recent number of *The Review*, in the course of an article about Alvarez's suicide book, are some very discomfiting remarks about Lowell (and, incidentally, about Sylvia Plath). The writer, Clive James, who has sprung into notice only in the last year or two, strikes me as the cleverest of the younger reviewers of English poetry. Not, to be sure, that there is that much competition; but, even against strong competition, James would stand out:

Trapped in his intentional fallacy, Alvarez is betting everything on the artist's sincerity: even if the artist hasn't been actually scarified by the perception of some external event, he will possess, it is hoped, the internal equipment to justify the pretence that he has. But pretend or not, the material presented needs to be judged with some view towards the external world and away from its creator's supposed mental condition. It's possible to gesture too blithely, whatever the motivation. Here, for example, is Lowell, in a recent sonnet about Sylvia Plath. The immediate occasion for this poem seems to have been an article on Lowell in *The Review* 24 by John Bayley, who favoured Plath with an epithet Lowell found objectionable.

A miniature mad talent? *Sylvia Plath,*
who'll wipe off the spit of your integrity,
rising in the saddle to slash at Auschwitz,
life tearing this and that, I am a woman?

Hannah Arendt once said that finally these matters can be understood only by the poets, but when you scan a piece of journey-work like this you start wondering if she was right. A lot of rhetoric had to go over the dam before all the concentration camps in the Reich and the occupied territories got whittled down to that one word 'Auschwitz' — hundreds of journalists and television anchor-men had to do their stuff. And at last, after the whole infinitely ramified nightmare had been trimmed to that one stub and the stub itself had been crushed to powder, it was time for Lowell to come along and toss off a line suggesting that in Sylvia Plath the *Endlösung* finally met its implacable opponent. Carrying a sword. Riding a horse.

On such moments of rarified bathos from his key poet Alvarez is confronted with the limitations of his critical position. . . . Lowell's internal condition presumably being one of routine agony, the material has undoubtedly surfaced with all the correct credentials. Nor does the technical control seem much lower than average. What is wrong is the sheer, shrieking inadequacy of the event as cited to the event as it happened. . . .

I quote Clive James at some length for two reasons. This is an argument which anybody who, like myself, considers Lowell as at his best a great poet will have to answer. And James's passage is a first-rate piece of polemical prose, and first-rate polemical prose is a much rarer commodity than, in our bad-tempered age, one might expect it to be. I sometimes try to write polemical prose myself, but find that I get flushed, excitable, hot under the collar: one must be cool when one is going for a cool kill. Earlier in his article, James had said this: "I have never been able to accept unquestioned the rightness of Sylvia Plath assimilating such infinities of torture to her own problems."

I think that James is too sound a critic ever to write such a sentence about Robert Lowell, in general. But one might think that the scathing and destructive phrase "routine agony" might imply that he would feel it fair about at least a number of the *Notebook* sonnets and their still uncollected sequels. Cooper and Cosgrave supply a case for the defense. Cooper's book is written out of love, as I think all good studies of a poet should be written; it is not indiscriminating love, but it is love rather in McTaggart's sense. When we truly love a poet or a person, we feel a certain complacency about the loved one's faults and weaknesses (Wordsworth's circumstantialities and prosiness, Hardy's clumsiness and pedantries) and do not want to alter the loved one's character, even for the better. Love is not benevolence. Cosgrave's book, on the other hand, is written in a mood of severe benevolence. He would like Lowell to be a better poet than he is, and to concentrate more consistently on the poetry of judgment, rather than the poetry of expression.

Cosgrave is a disciple of Yvor Winters, but with a far wider, more catholic, and sounder *taste* in poetry than Winters. He sees, for instance, as Winters failed to see, that Yeats in his poems on Irish politics and history is a great public poet. He quotes, on the other hand, what most readers, what probably he himself, would consider a very great piece of writing from T.S. Eliot, the long passage about sea noises from the beginning of *The Dry Salvages*, and agrees with Helen Gardner that here "the form is the perfect expression of the subject; so much so that in the end one can hardly distinguish subject from form." Yes, Cosgrave says, but Eliot was doing the wrong thing:

But poetry is not an instrument of expression; it is an instrument of judgment. Eliot reflects experience; he demonstrates not principles, but attachment to principles; and his sense of tragedy is diffuse and indulgent, a matter of mood rather than thought.

Lowell, for Cosgrave, approaches or achieves greatness when his poetry is an "instrument of judgement," when he can be seen in yet another "great tradition," which for Cosgrave is the tradition of Dryden, Pope, Dr. Johnson, Yeats when he is properly public (no poet earlier than the Restoration gets mentioned and, very surprisingly, there is nothing about Marvell's "Horatian Ode" or about Auden or Empson, both very consciously public poets at times; or about Graves, very much a poet of judgment, however indifferent he is, most of the time, to public social and political themes, but a judge, in a way, of human history as a whole).

Like Matthew Arnold, I am very suspicious of logic as a critical instrument, partly because I know something about logic, and critics

like Winters and Cosgrave, with a great flourish of logical method, are not logical enough. How would you set out, for instance, to "demonstrate a principle," even in prose? A principle is something in its nature undemonstrable, an assumption, a postulate, or an axiom, and you use it to demonstrate *something else*. Can you really think *in verse* — is the thought of the poet not mainly about the process of composition, and is the "thought" in a poem not just an element of composition as much as the "mood"? You could judge that the judgments of a great poet of judgment, like Pope, are often flat wrong: modern historians would say that he absurdly overestimated the consistency and integrity of Harley and Bolingbroke and was grossly unfair not to the capacity (which he recognized) but to the good sense and public spirit of Sir Robert Walpole. When Dr. Johnson attempts to adapt what Juvenal said, with some truth, of Imperial Rome to eighteenth-century London,

*Here falling houses thunder on your head,
And here a female atheist talks you dead,*

he has turned a neat couplet, but is he not, from the point of view of the social and cultural historian of eighteenth-century England, talking nonsense?

What Cosgrave calls the poetry of judgment is the poetry of effective rhetorical persuasion: I don't see how you could possibly "demonstrate the principle" that this is the only permissible kind of poetry, though it might be quite true that it was the kind of poetry that you, personally, specially liked. (There are some public poems that do strike me as not only rhetorically persuasive but *right* about what they are talking about: most notably in English, Yeats's "Easter 1916" and Marvell's "Horatian Ode." But I think, and indeed know, that they still work as great poems of persuasive rhetoric to readers who haven't done as much historical homework in their respective areas as I have.)

What is odd, and interesting, and reassuring, is that starting from such different grounds, Cooper and Cosgrave arrive at similar results. They agree with each other (and, for what that is worth, I agree with them) that Lowell's most complete achievements so far are "Waking Early Sunday Morning" and some of the other poems in *Near the Ocean*, though except for "Waking Early Sunday Morning" Cosgrave thinks the other poems in that volume, like "Central Park," in which he finds much to praise, partially flawed. He is the examiner, Cooper the lover. It is Cooper who, using more biographical detail, more flexibly and frankly, than Hugh Staples could in his fine pioneer study, gives us indirectly the case against Clive James. Lowell's agonies are not really "routine," any more than the agonies of America are: by ancestry, by involvement, by being a New England poet who went to school in

the South and learned there his essential Northernness, by an awareness of history that could have made him a great academic historian, by being a kind of radical and a kind of aristocrat at once, by reaching one hand back to Henry Adams and another forward to Ginsberg, he is representatively American in a way that no English poet of this time can be representatively English (England, culturally, is relapsing into the situation of the Heptarchy: there are Anglo-Welsh, Ulster, Anglo-Irish, Anglo-Scots, Lowlands, Northumbrian poets, and so on). It is range of experience and pounce of intelligence that do it. No doubt, in his recent sonnet poems, Lowell (like MacNeice in his "middle stretch") is a little flogging himself along, making will and determination take the place of spontaneity. (Not that his poems, agonizingly struggling toward utterance, were ever "spontaneous" in any facile sense; and not that Lowell, except in an odd stanza here and there about Maine, say, is ever a "lyrical" poet: but still there is a difference between the poem painfully struggling to be born and the poem being pushed into existence, because the poet must keep his hand in.) No doubt James is right, and he ought not to be facile about Auschwitz. He is not facile about America. And if he seems, for the time being, to have settled in England, there is a chance, no doubt, that from that distance he may recreate a marvelously rich America, as Eliot did, very late in life, in "The Dry Salvages."

G. S. Fraser

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BIRDSONG

I AM ELIJAH THRUSH. By James Purdy. Doubleday. \$4.95.

Imagine a critic whose preferences and prejudices when it comes to modern American fiction have been formed by a regular reading of, say, Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer and John Updike — what might he be expected to say about a novel with the following scenario? The narrator is a young black, Albert Peggs, in love with a golden eagle; he becomes involved with an aging actor, “mime, poet, and painter” called Elijah Thrush, who is himself in love with his mute great-grandson. He also becomes the memoirist of an heiress, Millicent de Frayne, who stopped growing old in 1913 when she fell in love with Elijah Thrush. All four of these people, plus the bird, are linked together in a number of ways which takes the book far beyond the simply narrative. Albert’s account outlines the frightening (and comic) ascendancy of Millicent over all of them, a series of preemptive power plays which culminates in a funereal wedding banquet on board a ship at sea. Albert is last heard taking over, from the doomed Elijah, Elijah’s role in his theater.

Our imaginary critic may well be tempted to dismiss it as perverse farce, a weird homoerotic daydream or nightmare, a frivolous and mannered piece of idiosyncratic surrealism, in all cases lacking the sort of pained “relevance” which he feels he can find among his preferred novelists. This, I fear, is how some American critics are going to receive James Purdy’s most recent novel, of which the above scenario is a crude outline. Purdy has never, it seems to me, been done justice by many of the leading contemporary critics and one reason, it may be, is that they simply don’t know how to read his work properly. “Relevance” is an elusive and often impoverishing concept, and it should not be felt that long ruminating monologues on modern times, or the dying embers of naturalism, constitute the most direct or even the most compelling ways of contacting present realities. There is such a thing as indirect relevance as well, and it can offer us riches and subtleties not attainable by headlong assaults on contemporaneity. Since I think it would be an act of injustice to undervalue this hauntingly serious and beautifully written book, I would like to suggest some of the ways in which it touches, in its own unique way, on matters which concern all of us.

We can say straightaway that the book centers on various kinds of parasitism, vampirism, sponging, addictions and habits: the appropriation of some vital part of a person — semen or soul, blood or youth

—by a resolute predator. We keep encountering the feeder and the fed, host and guest, the devourer and the devoured. Millicent is a very determined feeder, constantly pressing strange foods, rare delicacies, exotic potions and elixirs on Albert, just as she pours her words in his ear and thrusts money onto his poverty. However, forced bounty is no bounty at all, but an act of implacable will, and in seeming to give most Millicent in fact takes all. Albert is the main donor: metaphorically to Millicent and Elijah who in turn bestow on him unexpected rewards and uninvited projections; literally to his golden eagle which he feeds from his living flesh, a “habit” gradually displaced by his feelings for Elijah and Millicent and the great-grandson. Love, here as so often in Purdy’s work, tends to be a sickness rather than a satisfaction. His world is full of love, but love which takes distorted forms, failing, or being frustrated, in what might be true attachments. Everywhere there are annihilating failures of recognition, leaving us with a sense of lonely incomplete identities vaporizing back into the void, unfinished because unloving or unloved. Here then is a manifestly serious theme — people living off each other without loving each other — as serious in Purdy as in Hawthorne and James.

But this is only part of the novel. For instance, we gradually notice that the book is full of birds. Albert has his golden eagle, Elijah Thrush (*sic*) calls his great-grandson “Bird of Heaven” and, though mute, the boy articulates in bird song. Albert is referred to as “black eagle,” and so on. This is not purely gratuitous. Some sense of the mystery of birds is as old as history. In Purdy’s story “Home by Dark” the grandfather says to the boy: “Birds are really strange creatures. . . . They remember always where to go, where to build their nests, where to return to. . . .” Such a notion of birds would necessarily be attractive to directionless, unhoused, or mis-housed modern man. Since Purdy’s book is set in New York where man is not only, like all men, earthbound, but congested, claustrophobic, deep in the “behavioral sink,” the high incidence of birds moving through the words of the book seems to hold out the invitation and temptation of a higher, cleaner realm.

This novel suggests more than it says, and keeps its secrets in the midst of revelation. It is a book which devours its own allegories, but not before we have glimpsed their outlines. Thus, for instance, at one level the book is about the fate of America. The Bird of Heaven has “wild Indian eyes” and wears an Indian suit — he is silent, even as the voice of the Indian is no longer heard in the land. Albert is black and comes from Alabama, but like so many displaced blacks he has come North. Elijah was brought up in Illinois and Nebraska but has been drawn East to become a theatrical role-player. Millicent we may take to be quintessentially New York. The Indian and the black have their

original beauty, but neither of them is at home in the society and the language that surrounds them. More to the point, the aging parts of America need something the black and the Indian have, to keep themselves going. The love is there, but it goes wrong, and no vitalizing, mutually enriching connections are established. The different fragments of America no more compose a unity in the book than they do in real life. And the fact that it is the black narrator who keeps the "almost extinct" golden eagle alive suggests something about the tenuous continuities of the authentic natural life of America. Millicent kills the eagle, stuffs it and serves up the meat at the wedding feast. Is this what the whites have done to America?

From the start, Purdy's work has revealed an intense awareness of all that can go grievously and damagingly wrong in the family unit. He has portrayed unparented children, unchilded parents, the unreal father, the mother who possesses or relinquishes at the wrong times. And in the absence of an actual family he has shown all manner of would-be surrogate parents and guardians, and has explored the adoptive inclination to uncanny depth. In many of his short stories (and Purdy is one of the most accomplished writers in this genre to have appeared in America), we find some disruption or failure of the family. In *I Am Elijah Thrush* there is no actual legitimized family, but this allows Purdy to explore the notion of the family in broader terms. Can there, indeed, be an American family? From the start Albert, who seems to retain no notion of his real parents, senses some compelling involvement, even identity, with the strange white couple who effectively take him over. Millicent uses Albert ruthlessly and heartlessly, but as he says, "only a mother could have been so cruel," an idea more emphatically echoed at the wedding banquet when she announces to Albert, "I am your mother"; while soon after Elijah addresses Albert as "my child," and Albert himself has "the giddy feeling I was being present at the marriage of my own parents." We may feel that Albert is at last "parented." This prepares us for the climax. Elijah owns a theater at which he dances a variety of roles. As the wedding ship draws him away from America, helpless in Millicent's clutches, he sends out one last message to Albert (this time through a megaphone, as communication is rapidly fading). His instruction is to keep his theater open and "play all my roles." Thus at the end, Albert comes forward on stage and announces with a sob, "I am Elijah Thrush." He isn't, manifestly, but as "son" and "inheritor" he has adopted the imposed identity. What Elijah has had to relinquish, Albert will take on; the young black takes over from the aging white. He could, thereby, be maintaining a threatened continuity, and what is more natural than for the son to take the place of the dethroned, if not the defunct, father? At the same time, it is

an ambiguous declaration, for if he is Elijah Thrush, where has Albert Peggs gone? It could be the final victory for the white people to make him negate his black identity in order to perpetuate their theatricalized mythologies.

Let's take a closer look at the members of the family. Millicent has all the power, though her role is not without its poignancy (Purdy is, incidentally, one of the few American writers who seem to understand women). She has a hand like a claw, a tongue like a cow's, the strength of a man. She seems to grow taller in her imperiousness, and both Albert and Elijah find themselves on the floor in front of her more than once. She gives Elijah his clothes, his cosmetics, and — a possibility conceded by Elijah — perhaps his very existence. Elijah is a true mesmerist, an old man who can nevertheless play the "reincarnation" of the Most Beautiful Man in the World. In his theater he holds his audience in raptures with his erotic and hedonistic dances. On the walls there are pictures showing the mine as "Hiawatha, the child Moses, Apollo, and Jesus in the Garden with Mary Magdalene"; Indian boy, Hebrew prophet, Greek God, Christ the Redeemer; beauty, wisdom, light, salvation — or a parodistic salmagundi of these once revered figures. Where Millicent demands total "concession" and obedience, Elijah asks for "total fidelity, total oneness." Either way, their attitudes seem to contain little respect for the independent otherness of people, for in their different ways they are both engorgers. Their marriage is scarcely happy, though it might be said that they were made for each other.

And what of the "child" of this marriage, Albert Peggs? He is both the recipient of Millicent's money, memories, and orders, and "the lover of the spiritual world of Elijah Thrush." He is often ordered to kneel, has seizures, feels ill, even thinks he is going mad. He is a sponge who takes in everything the white people urge on him, including their own projections of his blackhood; at the same time, while he absorbs he exudes, as any pressed sponge will, and there is a constant flowing of liquid out of his body — sweat, foam — just as he is drinking in, however unwillingly, his new surroundings. And it must be emphasized that there is a very specific contemporary relevance here. Albert is the black who has lost his Southern self, and is as yet unable to find a new self in the North. He is mythologized by the whites, but that is not the same thing as rendering him an identity. In his position he is very vulnerable and it is part of his fate to be swamped in projections which prematurely deform what is as yet his unformed self. If he is the inheritor he is also the victim; it may be "his period," but coming into his "inheritance" is not an unambiguous privilege. At the wedding of his surrogate parents, Albert can no longer remember his name, which would indicate the final loss of whatever there was to the original

Albert Peggs. His final declaration, "I am Elijah Thrush," is a crucial act of renomination and at the same time his final self-annihilating act of obedience to white impositions. In the alchemy of the book, is black transformed into gold? Or, more sinisterly, is black forcibly turned into white? It could be that Albert, having been emptied out, is by the end filled up with Elijah Thrush—the host turned into the parasite. But perhaps he does it for love.

Millicent admits that "we were not the right people" to "bring Albert out," but she insists that he had to come out sometime. Again, near the end, Elijah insists that "we've boarded the wrong ship." Just so Fenton Riddleway, in 63: *Dream Palace*, says with sudden panic: "Do you think we're really in the right house maybe?" Wrong house, wrong ship, wrong parents—to many of Purdy's bereft and wandering figures, such apprehensions are only aspects of a larger terror, that of having fallen into the wrong world, which, however, is the only world there is. If there is an intermittent feeling that this is the wrong world, it is not suprising that we should be able to detect the recurrence of a distinct ontological anxiety or uncertainty—particularly in Albert who has no place in this world and thus no self.

But in addition to being about the problems of relationships, America, the family, identity, perhaps most importantly the book is about language. Purdy's work is full of all kinds of narrators, writers, fabricators, cofabulists, memoirists, all in different ways either trying to ensnare the reality of another person's life in words, or compelled to undertake the listening and writing task, or actually attempting to evoke some reality to fill in the dark pits of their ignorance. As often as not, the reality these people are after eludes their words and vanishes into the unreachable silence of absence or death. To be born is to be inserted into a particular discourse, which to a large extent will determine the values, modes of perception, formulations of reality, by which and in which we live. And quite as often as feeling that they are in the wrong house, Purdy's central figures feel that they are in the wrong language. Thus Albert, a reluctant memoirist, finds that the words poured into him radically change his consciousness (some of his lapses from consciousness may be attributed to a surfeit of the wrong words). As he realizes from the start, once he has met Elijah Thrush he starts "falling into his . . . language"; and here is a more important statement: "More than anything else . . . the money, the humiliation, the hate of this great house where I was a paid memoirist, it was the language spoken which was now becoming mine that made me go out of my head." There are different forms of enslavement, and black Albert has been taken over, his mind both narcotized and manacled, by an alien language. To say that as a narrator he hardly sounds like

a black person is not enough: the point is that he sounds like no person at all. Albert discovers that Millicent and Elijah “often employed the identical favorite phrases, words, idioms.” To the extent that Albert accepts being absorbed into this surrogate family, he has to accept that language, so that the narrator and the narrated come to share and sustain a curious many layered discourse characterized by archaic gentilities, abrupt formalities, exaggerated politeness, unexpected fragments of the vernacular and colloquial, ritualized abuse, splenetic irritability, unprovoked imperiousness, obscuring pedantries — and sudden helpless cries of yearning, need, pain, and love. If Albert can say “as you done promised me” in traditional darky dialect, he can also shout out “Cunctator of cuntators,” a positively Nabokovian lexical obscurity (it means “delayer”). He is full of words but has no language to call his own, employing instead the synthetic language of those around him. It is one more paradox that Albert’s linguistic confusion, or inherited eclecticism, is also Purdy’s stylistic triumph.

There is one further aspect to the existence of the weird, dissonant speech of the book, a speech as deracinated as the speakers. One statement from Millicent points directly to it. Thus she addresses the Bird of Heaven: “But be glad, my angel, you can’t talk. Your affliction is your happiness. It’s talking that has made man lower than the brutes of creation, and is God’s most calamitous mistake from which all other mistakes stem. Had the beast never talked, this would be a fairer, greener place, and history, that parched synthetic middling bore of a nightmare, which is eating away even at my brains, would never have been.” Her pessimism and exhaustion are her own, but it is a truism that without speech there would be no culture, history, consciousness — or books. Purdy himself uses words brilliantly, and it is only an apparent paradox that one of the main feelings in his work is that talk is our torment; that is, it torments us with the illusion of communication, while obscuring or distorting what we have to say. It may also take the place of emotion, or serve as a powerful tool in using people as things to implement one’s own schemes. How much better to be unconsciously in nature, singing like a bird, instead of being trapped in language and as Conrad put it, “out of life — utterly out of it”; or, if we can’t regress to a prelingual state, then to transcend language, entering the heaven-haven of silence. These are not Purdy’s specific conclusions but meditations provoked by the book. Looked at another way, the book accepts that man, like a Beckett character, will go on muttering to the end, dreaming of a birdsong lost and a silence yet to be reached. But then this book does so many things, finally resisting demystification through its inexhaustible magic.

Tony Tanner

WHEN WE WERE YOUNG

RUN-THROUGH: A MEMOIR. By John Houseman. Simon and Schuster. \$9.95.

THE NEW DEAL ART PROJECTS. AN ANTHOLOGY OF MEMOIRS. Edited by Francis V. O'Connor. Smithsonian Institution Press. \$12.50.

John Houseman's memoir is unintimate and unconfessional for all its candor, and although we are told essentially what the author did or had done to him between his birth in Bucharest in 1902 and the beginning of World War II, his "education," like that of Henry Adams, is neatly circumscribed and judiciously reticent. A short "Overture" takes care of his adolescence and youth. It might be called "The Shaping of Jacques Houseman." The following three sections or "Acts" form an engaging and observant chronicle of Houseman's experiences in the theatrical world of the 1930s.

The little polyglot cosmopolite, Jacques Haussmann, habitué of Vienna, Berlin, Paris, Rome and numerous continental resorts and spiritually akin to Candide, Felix Krull, and Augie March, would seem to have little in common with John Houseman, impresario. Yet the discrepant episodes of his European years determined his later blunders and successes. How lucky for him that his British-born mother insisted that he learn modern languages, that he acquired an English public school education along with a proper accent and social ease. A whirl in the grain market after an intercontinental apprenticeship almost made him a tycoon in his twenties. Fortunately for the American theater, it ended in spectacular failure, but adventures in money-making were not utterly wasted on the future director. Artist Houseman — fiction writer, critic, music lover — responded unerringly to what was original and audacious on the stage. Businessman Houseman after his fiasco in trade demonstrated unusual capacity for what he calls "collective collaboration," an ability to coordinate the business as well as the technical and personal details of theatrical production.

Read simply as a historical record of the Depression decade, *Run-Through* is far superior to most recollections of the period, largely solipsistic exercises casting colored lights on disremembered events. Houseman had made a practice, he tells us, of "relating my theatrical activity to the historical moments of the time." He is sensitive to social nuances, peppers his book with evocative impressions of places — most notably Chicago, Harlem, Kansas City — and when he mentions anyone, whether celebrated or unimportant, the name is never left dangling; it is invariably linked with an illustrative fact or quotation or conversation. The result is in part a selective and subjective "history" of the

New York stage in the 1930s by an observer-participant more interested in his subject than in himself.

It begins when Houseman, near broke after "Black Thursday," establishes a toehold in the theater world thanks to "luck, shrewd associations, and my knowledge of languages." He performs as "a sort of director-producer-impresario" for Virgil Thompson's *Four Saints in Three Acts* (the start of a long and happy association), painfully comes to know the egotism and duplicity of the commercial theater, and accommodates himself in time to "the strange process of meeting and parting, wooing and testing, trusting and knifing that forms part of the business of getting a play on the stage." His collaboration with Orson Welles antedates his affiliation with the Federal Theatre and continues through the hectic interlude of the Mercury Theatre—established by Houseman and Welles in 1937—into the post-Mercury days when Houseman, Herman Mankiewicz, and Welles fabricate *Citizen Kane*. *Run-Through* effectively closes with Houseman's production of Richard Wright's *Native Son*.

Such a barebones summary, of course, omits the real substance of the book as well as its literary qualities. Houseman is a writer, not a "personality," and his interesting and lively narrative is punctuated by a series of what Henry James used to call "discriminated occasions."

A whole cluster of them have to do with Houseman's discovery of and subsequent involvement with the prodigy, Orson Welles, who so dominates the book that autobiography at moments shades into biography. He first spotted the "monstrous boy" when Welles, in the role of Tybalt, contributed a few moments of energy and terror to an otherwise tepid production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Houseman remembered "the voice of such power and clarity" that "tore like a high wind through the genteel, well-modulated voices of the well-trained professionals" and chose him for the part of the doomed capitalist in Archibald MacLeish's verse play, *Panic*. Thereafter he entered partnership with Welles, combining "the tricky roles of producer, censor, advisor, impresario, father, older brother, and bosom friend." It turned out to be a punishing and rewarding arrangement with Houseman cheerfully playing the subordinate. He tried to supply Welles's human and artistic needs and to protect him from outer and inner pressures. Houseman's account of his struggles with the unruly Faustus-Welles oscillating between "narcissism and self-loathing" are at once comical and poignant. Their partnership ended "full of hatred and distrust of each other," but Houseman never doubted the genius of his titanic friend even while regretting that Welles allowed his appetite for publicity to become "a compensation and a substitute for creation."

Out of the Houseman-Welles collaboration came some of the most original and stunning dramatic events of the decade. Houseman's descriptions of the process by which these productions crystallized out of chaos are masterly, but they also bring out the political and social tensions of the Depression age. The splendid voodoo *Macbeth* was both a theatrical triumph and a victory in race relations. Black performers heretofore confined to the most stereotyped Sambo roles, as Roi Otley noted at the time, were "not lampooned or made the brunt of laughter. We attended the *Macbeth* showing happy in the thought we wouldn't again be reminded, with all its various implications, that we were niggers." *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* was not only a revolutionary staging of an Elizabethan play but (with the prodigious black actor, Jack Carter, as a "contemptuous and elegant" Mephistopheles) "an early and successful example of integrated casting." And the Mercury Theatre's modern-dress *Julius Caesar* in which Roman aristocrats dressed like Mussolini's Blackshirts and the crowd "wore the dark, nondescript street clothes of the big-city proletariat," paralleled the decaying Roman republic and the contemporary dictatorships.

Houseman neither then nor later considered himself a member of the "art is a weapon" school of drama and felt remote — probably for dramaturgical more than ideological reasons — from "the collective and exclusive world of the Group Theatre." All the same, some of the drollest sections of *Run-Through* touch upon his occasional dealings with Party theoreticians. The spectacle of the CP's cultural expert, V. J. Jerome, analyzing in public the political drift of MacLeish's *Panic* and summoning the "splendid lonely poet" (who shared the stage with him) "to sing the epic of the proletariat advancing through day-to-day struggle to power" is surely a bright spot in the pageant of American Communism. A second conference with Jerome, inspired by the Mercury Theatre's production of George Buechner's *Danton's Death*, was more serious. To Party officials, the Danton-Trotsky analogy seemed dangerously provocative, especially so since the ideological fires kindled by the recent Moscow Trials still burned. Houseman managed to prevent an open rupture with Jerome, but he could no longer count on the patronage of the Communists and fellow-travelers who had helped to sustain his company.

By 1939 when Congress torpedoed the Federal Theatre Project, it was plain that the kind of classic government-supported theater Houseman hoped to establish was vulnerable to the attacks of radicals and philistines. Harold Clurman and his friends found the Mercury Theatre "sensational but not controversial." But if Houseman's company held no pronounced radical views, as theatrical innovators they were very controversial and far readier than their radical critics to junk the "obstin-

ately naturalistic" conventions adhered to by both the Left and commercial theater. Unfortunately the brilliant experiments of Houseman and Welles cut no ice with congressmen who grudgingly tolerated the Federal Theatre Project as a temporary relief measure while never ceasing to regard it as a haven for boondogglers and subversives. The Mercury Theatre, despite its brilliant stage and radio successes, could not survive (so the *Times* reported) "the cost of repertory and the egotism of its directors."

The New Deal Art Projects, the subject of Francis V. O'Connor's *Anthology of Memoirs*, provoked less official animosity than the Federal Theatre did, but the recollecting contributors agree that artists, too, had to cope with unsympathetic government representatives and a hostile press. To be sure the WPA enabled the muralists, easel painters, sculptors, and art teachers, in many cases, to preserve and develop their skills as well as to eat, but to their paymasters, the advancement of art was inadvertent. Work relief for the artist, in their eyes, had only an economic purpose. In return for his government check, the "hobohemian chiseler" ought to be grateful and not bite the hands of his donors. He should work regular hours (inspectors saw to that), strive for excellence and originality, avoid controversy, and produce work in sufficient quantities to justify his keep.

The ten contributors were attached at one time or another during the 1930s to various federal arts projects and to programs supported by the State of New York and New York City. They remember those miserable and happy days with a certain nostalgia and collectively reject the popularly held notion that government-sponsored art of the 1930s was perpetrated by bad and justly forgotten artists. Their essays suggest that the opposite was true — fine artists produced fine work. Acknowledging the red tape and pettiness of officialdom, they contend that the Art Projects broke the hold of gentility on museums and art schools while creating a new audience for American artists; fostered important developments in the techniques of mural and easel painting and in the graphic arts; provided opportunities for artists of differing and often warring schools to experiment and to discover their own mediums and styles and to express what they saw, felt, and knew.

All of this and more can be extracted from the autobiographical essays which together comprise a detailed survey of the art program between 1933 and 1943. It is a complicated story (the Treasury Department alone directed three distinct operations), but the anthology's emphasis is quite properly on the WPA's Federal Art Project. Separate chapters are given to mural painting, easel painting, sculpture, graphics, the Index of American Design, artists' organizations, the abstract artists,

the FAP and the New York World's Fair of 1939–1940, and the New York City Municipal Art Galleries. The archival book ends with a “dialogue” in which five of the veterans and the editor hash over the consequences and implications of the experiment in government art patronage.

Reading *The New Deal Art Projects* is like overhearing a disjointed rap session by a group of alumni reminiscing about the old days. The essays, as might be expected, overlap; the authors interpolate their pages with lists of names, galleries, exhibitions and the like which art historians of the period will undoubtedly find useful but which are too often unsatisfactorily integrated into the fabric of the narratives. The editor would have been well advised to preface the specialized essays with an overview of the art scene in the 1930s by someone as knowledgeable, say, as Donald Egbert, an art historian well informed on the subject of social radicalism and the arts.

Lincoln Rothchild's “Artists' Organizations of the Depression Decade” pays insufficient attention to the Communist party's role in the formation of the Artists' Union and later of the American Artists' Congresses and the effect of the shifting Party line on aesthetic debates in this period. The extent of the Party's domination of artists' unions and associations may very well be exaggerated, as Rothchild suggests, but it is not merely coincidental that the CP vigorously backed the WPA art programs even though the radicals on relief apparently paid little attention to Party directives as they applied to the fine arts and even though some of the good Stalinists among them were tainted with Formalism.

These qualifications detract very little from the value of O'Connor's compilation nor do they invalidate the achievements of the artists and supervisors, well or little known, who are mentioned in its pages. The contributors, graduates of the Federal Art Project, are loyal to their Alma Mater if not entirely uncritical. Edward Laning, author of the essay on “The New Deal Mural Projects,” sees the Depression decade as the worst and best of times, “our Golden Age, the only humane era in our history, the one brief period when we permitted ourselves to be good.” In the opinion of Audrey McMahon, former director of the New York region, the Federal Art Project offers a model “for the artists and public of tomorrow,” and she concludes: “never in the history of any land has so much cultural progress been achieved in so brief a time as in the New Deal years.” “It was a rich and exciting experience, both esthetically and socially,” writes the sculptor, Robert Cronbach, “and one I should have hated to miss.” Jacob Kainen remembers the Project days “with mixed feelings.” He calls attention to the uninviting

“social, political, and artistic climate,” but he also concedes the “warm feeling of boon companionship in a common enterprise, even though we didn’t recognize that it was for high stakes.” Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne attributes “the frenzied art explosion today” to the “unprecedented, unequalled product of the Depression, the WPA Federal Art Project,” and sees “the most unpopular *avant-garde* minority” of those times, the abstract artists, as the principal beneficiaries.

Other contributors to the volume support these claims, as do many of the skillfully selected and rarely seen illustrations from the work of the Project artists. And yet as the anthology shows, the artists paid a price for their rescue and yielded some of their independence to the holders of the purse. They did not have to cope with an official aesthetic or with the kind of ferocious censorship imposed on their Soviet counterparts (whose lot the Left artists mistakenly exalted), but they had in certain instances to submit to the tastes of their clients. Audrey McMahon could not always protect them from WPA administrators like General Brehen Somervell who hated artists or from the threat of periodic firings. The WPA not only dispensed funds. It also let loose a plague of investigators and time-keepers and bureaucrats — perhaps the forerunners of an even more unlovely breed who surfaced in the 1950s.

When the United States went to war, the mural painters still in the Project designed camouflage patterns, and the graphic artists turned out propaganda posters. In 1943, the Project was “finalized.” Thousands of WPA paintings which had been placed in storage, some of them by now celebrated artists, were sold as so many pounds of canvas. Scholars like Mr. O’Connor are working indefatigably to recover the lost work of those years, but the experiences of publicly supported artists in the 1930s can serve as a caveat as well as a hope for those who now look to Washington as Protector and Curator of the arts.

Daniel Aaron

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GROWING UP TOGETHER

SKY. By Michael Benedikt. Wesleyan. \$4.75; paper \$2.25.

MOLE NOTES. By Michael Benedikt. Wesleyan. \$10.00; paper \$3.45.

DOUBLE DREAM OF SPRING. By John Ashbery. Dutton. \$4.95; paper \$2.45.

THREE POEMS. By John Ashbery. Viking. \$5.95; paper \$1.95.

DARKER. By Mark Strand. Atheneum. \$2.95.

Michael Benedikt, John Ashbery and Mark Strand are three poets who have already created a distinctive voice and a following for themselves. They therefore enjoy the questionable good fortune of being watched more carefully with their present work than they were before. Ashbery and Strand bear up well under the scrutiny; Benedikt, sorry to say, doesn't.

Benedikt's talents seldom come to focus in *Sky*, his recent book of verse poems, and scarcely at all in *Mole Notes*, his latest book, a collection of prose poems. In his verse poems, Benedikt is too often merely cute when he wants to be witty, too often self-conscious and even self-promoting when he should remain silent. "And now when I write poetry I don't know what I am saying anymore, only what I'm doing," Benedikt says in "Let Me Out." It's a joke with metaphysical ambitions of the sort we come to expect, with considerable resignation, in many of these poems. We hear about "the portability of time," "little dialogues of matter and spirit," "the jar of eternity," "the day of eternity," "The Audience for Eternity." We are even told that "Late, late, the student of wonder sits at the tables of thought, and in the chairs of memory, smoking the cigarettes of eternity."

Along with this coy straining toward "Serious Thought" is a confessional mode prevented from self-revelation by being merely chic: we learn that Benedikt likes Godard, LeRoi Jones and Charles Olson, Dylan (to whom he dedicates a poem), Allan Kaplan a *lot*, Jane Fonda (especially her ass and especially as viewed in *Barbarella*), Bill Haley and the Comets, Fifth Avenue apartments, a particular racoon in the Central Park Zoo, and further, that:

Bundle, hunch, flaunt, corpse, lapse, kiss, fiddle, pelt,
consume, erode, erotic, remake, tape, eyelash

Are 7 one-syllable words and 7 two-syllable words I like

I like all 3 and 4 syllable words for their more complex symmetry

*Regarding the names of people, I would like to refer you to my
poem, Naming the Baby*

"Naming the Baby" is funny and talented, but in no way equal to its intentions. The poem begins with the proposition that since "everything is consumed by History," it's become difficult to name a new baby, since its name will most probably determine its destiny. There follows an amusing catalogue of the inevitable careers of the world's fledgling Byrons, Adolfs, Arthurs, Geronimos, et al., concluding with the name "Michael." (As in "Benedikt.") Michael's destiny is to "accomplish much with regard to expanding our/ ideas of structure, despite criticism from the poetically stultified,/ dumb, and entrenched." Benedikt has one eye desultorily on the page, while the other eye peers anxiously toward the critic and the review. The last poem in the volume (appropriately called "Regrets") begins with an off-hand apologia which might do service for the uneven quality of the volume as a whole: "I don't take too many days any more to do anything in." It's a shame he doesn't, since Benedikt is actually right: he does, in his best poems, know what he's doing. It would just be nice if he listened more carefully to what he's saying.

The expansive quality of the jokes in *Sky* prepares us for *Mole Notes*, Benedikt's most recent book, this one of prose poems. The "poems" (Benedikt insists repeatedly on the designation) are strung together on the loose thread of Mole's adventures, mostly misadventures, in the world of man. Mole is born, grows up, tries to join the human race, can't, philosophizes some, decides it really isn't worth the trouble anyway, all human things considered, and thereupon departs earth in a kind of Pop Art apotheosis. Narrative comes and goes, thereby allowing Benedikt the freedom to dilate on whatever his mind lights upon: ecology, Mae West, the military mind, the literal truth of metaphor, etc. But the trickeries and self-consciousness of *Sky* continue, along with the same unsureness of voice and sudden failures of humor — curious lapses in a poet who, on occasions, can be so poised and sly. In *Sky* the few near-successes are usually the shorter poems ("Tuberose," "Advice to One More Novice in New York") in which Benedikt exercises some control over his luxuriantly casual manner. In *Mole Notes*, it's anybody's guess.

The pronounced diastole of hope and despair that runs through John Ashbery's *Double Dream of Spring* is beautifully described at the beginning of "Spring Day":

*The immense hope, and forbearance
Trailing out of night, to sidewalks of the day
Like air breathed into a paper city, exhaled
As night returns bringing doubts*

*That swarm around the sleeper's head
But are fended off with clubs and knives, so that morning
Installs again in cold hope
The air that was yesterday, is what you are,*

In so many phases the head slips from the hand.

The problem Ashbery sets himself in his adventurous and restless poetry is the description of the journey through "so many phases" of this alternately hopeful and despairing self. But there are many Siren calls on the voyage of description and definition: the dangerous encrustations of history and language, ritual and habit, are omnipresent, and often omnipotent, in Ashbery's world. In one of the best of the "defining" poems, "Definition of Blue," a defenseless-sounding voice begins the poem trapped in the very clichés and platitudes that make significant definition all but impossible. Not only the world, but we ourselves are inhabited primarily by platitudes and abstractions of reality. Moreover, the poetic counterparts to public cliché provide no effective resistance. As the voice wearily and wittily reminds us, the "new" imaginative reactions to conformities are "all of them . . . in constant use." "The most that can be said for them further" is that by continual erosion of the worn clichés and metaphors, we can arrive, at least momentarily, at a central, essential, defining metaphor (the "Blue" of the title): "a kind of dust or exaggerated pumice/ Which fills space and transforms it, becoming a medium/ In which it is possible to recognize oneself." Notice the rather frantically extemporized "originality" of that initial image. It's as if Ashbery calls attention to his own originality only as he watches it dissolve. He holds to it only in the interest of the other images it might support—in this case the fragmented, fugitive self which might inhabit the defined "blue."

But that self is itself a cheat, yet accepted as such with grace and inquisitiveness: it is "A portrait, smooth as glass . . . built up out of multiple corrections/ And it has no relation to the space or time in which it was lived." It is a bit of suspended animation, less real but for the nonce more desirable than those "chasms of night that fight us/ By being hidden and present." But the dissolution of the projected and fragmentary portrait is inevitable. And so there is a return to a drearily quotidian and impoverished self, since there is nothing to support the imagined portrait in space except the imagination of the blue medium which, because it eludes "final" definition, eventually vanishes, "while, you, in this nether world that/ could not be better/ Waken each morning to the exact value of what you did and said,/ which remains." "Definition of Blue" is a truly fine poem and in its high in-

telligence and wit, something like Wittgenstein as played by W. C. Fields. It sets the level of the whole volume at a height to which few of Ashbery's contemporaries can aspire.

Ashbery's impressive talents, serving so brilliant and skeptical a mind, make for a difficult poetry; and it would be condescending to his accomplishment, as well as disingenuous, to ignore the difficulty. In his intense explorations into the fictions not only of an essential self but also of an essential art, Ashbery's discontinuous meditations often become intensely private, and at times inaccessible. As with earlier "visionary" poets like Blake and of course the later Stevens, with whom Ashbery is often linked and from whom he happily steals in a poem like "Chateau Hardware," it sometimes happens that the world of familiar objects and relations recedes, "You" designates a somewhat solipsistic "I," and everyone and everything else becomes a dimly-perceived "them" and "it." On these occasions, Ashbery's poetry runs the risk of vanishing into the imagined world of its own favorite dream, the risk of consulting only with its own motions, as its ideas and tones constantly dissolve into and out of one another like a beautiful drift of clouds. It's as if, sometimes, the poetry were so private and self-sufficient that it could dispense with the irksome necessity of an audience.

But while these poems *are* private and self-sufficient, at their best they are much less obscure, less veiled, than some critics have said. Moreover, there is also in Ashbery the insufficiently-remarked power of his startlingly sudden, simple, moving human clarity. His poetry is made restlessly alive by virtue of the tough job of "holding on to the hard earth so as not to get thrown off,/ With an occasional dream, a vision." It's this relentless pursuit of the "occasional dream," inhabiting a world so desirable and yet so remote as to require the surrealistic vocabulary and imagery of dreams, that holds the reader's attention. The *apparently* real world is indeed remote in Ashbery's poetry, and it is always ready to "tug" us back to those "respectable purlieus" of the unimagined ordinary, "this state of being which is not so big after all." But even that second-best reality contains the possibility of imaginative remove, "This banality which in the last analysis is our/ Most precious possession, because allowing us to/ Rise above ourselves." Ashbery reminds us in the superb "Soonest Mended" that even though these imaginative flights are rare and fugitive, nevertheless:

*Night after night this message returns, repeated
In the flickering bulbs of the sky, raised past us, taken away from us,
Yet ours over and over until the end that is past truth,
The being of our sentences, in the climate that fostered them,
Not ours to own, like a book, but to be with, and sometimes
To be without, alone and desperate.*

*But the fantasy makes it ours, a kind of fence-sitting
Raised to the level of an esthetic ideal.*

It's exhilarating to watch Mr. Ashbery maintain his precarious balance on an "esthetic ideal" which seems to be raised higher with each new book. The latest, *Three Poems*, (three extended meditations in prose) will excite aficionados of his work, but it probably won't, as an introduction, win him new converts.

If in reading Ashbery we are referred back to Stevens, in reading Mark Strand we are referred even further back, to Emily Dickinson. Their shared community of stylistic concerns is so obvious that Strand sounds unmistakably like the earlier poet in the closing lines of his previously published "Moontan": "I know that soon/ the day will come/ to wash away the moon's/ white stain,/ that I shall walk/ in the morning sun/ invisible/ as anyone." Also, the two poets share access to the visionary experience. Strand concludes a recent poem, "The Dance," by posing the rhetorical question: "And who isn't borne again and again into heaven?"

But in Strand's best work, this visionary habit becomes something uniquely his own by virtue of his transformation of the Dickinsonian macabre into the surrealistic and phantasmagorical. Moreover, though one previously heard occasional echoes of earlier poets in his first two books (*Sleeping With One Eye Open* and *Reasons For Moving*), in *Darker*, his latest and best book to date, Mark Strand now sounds most like himself. Here, for example, is "Not Dying":

*These wrinkles are nothing.
These gray hairs are nothing.
This stomach which sags
with old food, these bruised
and swollen ankles,
my darkening brain,
they are nothing.
I am the same boy
my mother used to kiss.*

*The years change nothing.
On windless summer nights
I feel those kisses
slide from her dark
lips far away,
and in winter they float
over the frozen pines
and arrive covered with snow.
They keep me young.*

*My passion for milk
is uncontrollable still.*

*I am driven by innocence.
 From bed to chair I crawl
 and back again.
 I shall not die.
 The grave result
 and token of birth, my body
 remembers and holds fast.*

Those sullen assertions and blunt rhythms, the fatigue of that initial catalogue with its ominously disquieting imagery, the stubbornness of the voice, evident even in the title, the discomforting associations of "uncontrollable," "crawl," "grave," and "token"—these are just a few of the qualities which demonstrate the emergence of a powerfully original poetic voice.

Although Strand has clearly come into his own in *Darker*, he bears comparison with Dickinson in one final respect—the reiterated conviction which runs throughout his book that endings are often the disguised preludes to new beginnings. "I praise the pain of revival and the bliss of decline," Strand sings in one of the remarkably beautiful chants. And in the most successful poems in this book ("My Life," "My Life By Somebody Else," "The Remains"), it is often the renewed and renewing conflict between revival and decline that renders this poetry so compellingly attractive and alive. Life is a constantly dangerous business in Strand's world, and the present is most perilous of all: "Nothing will tell you/ where you are./ Each moment is a place/ you've never been. . . . The present is always dark./ Its maps are black,/ rising from nothing,/ describing,/ in their slow ascent/ into themselves,/ their own voyage,/ its emptiness,/ the bleak. temperate/ necessity of its completion."

In documenting that dark present and "the bleak, temperate/ necessity of its completion," Strand's best poetry achieves such luminous insight into his own condition and the continual process of "beginning again without anything" that self-recognition becomes revelation and delight is transfigured into ecstasy. Far from being merely confessional poems (though deeply personal poems), Strand's best work is so cleared of the muck and decor of "personality," so pared to the bones of the speaker's essential humanity, that reading this volume is like scanning the logbook of a private soul. This is a poetry of high artifice and strong passion, and Strand's powerfully original voice will find resonant echoes in the minds of his readers. In "The Guardian," Strand apostrophizes the figure of the title: "Guardian of my death,/ preserve my absence. I am alive." He certainly is. Buy a copy of *Darker*. Support Mark Strand. He's *very* good.

Alan Helms

TO THE END OF THE NIGHT

THE PASSION OF ROBERT BRONSON. By J. M. Alonso. The McCall Publishing Company. \$5.95.

THE BUSHWHACKED PIANO. By Thomas McGuane. Simon and Schuster. \$5.95.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL. By E. L. Doctorow. Random House. \$6.95.

In this get-rich-quick America somebody is missing the chance for a fast buck. Consider *The Insomniac's Book Guild* and its simple motto: "Our Books Put You To Sleep." Volume after volume selected by a distinguished panel of judges each superbly qualified for his job because he, like each subscriber, has known the terror of the night.

A book the person who dreams of sleep would be smart to take is J. M. Alonso's *The Passion of Robert Bronson*, a hugely ambitious novel about among others, two thinly disguised and grotesquely distorted real-life writers. One, in this *roman à clef* feat, is a Boston-American poet. Named Robert Bronson for libel purposes. Another is his anima of the people, a Midwestern writer, with a Catholic girlhood behind her, named Celeste Riley. "A number of her stories, remarkable for their unsparring sexual candor about herself and her well-known associates, people whose names will be remembered as long as there is an interest in the prose, poetry, and politics of the American thirties, were strung together to make a novel, entitled *Tell Me Who You Are*." Celeste writes about a heroine named Irene McNertney, and Mr. Alonso includes several of these stories and some of Mr. Bronson's poems here. They are, needless to say, not a wit as good as their originals.

Dr. Mal Waters (get it?), Robert Bronson's psychiatrist supplies X. J. Muldoon — a Boston professor and the book's narrator — with tapes of Bronson's psychiatric sessions. So, with tapes, autobiographical stories, the diary of Frank Chase, who's one of Celeste's lovers dontcha know, and Bronson's poems, we have here quite a mixed bag of shticks.

Some books about real people are only interesting if you know who's who. And some are interesting despite that. *The Passion of Robert Bronson* would have been more interesting if it had not been about real people even if one simply *adores* gossip. Mr. Alonso is a good writer almost in spite of himself and his intramural games, and the energy that must have gone into the act of reducing complicated people into fools, without meaning to, is exhausting just to think about.

Thomas McGuane's *The Bushwhacked Piano* was not selected by *The Insomniac's Book Guild*. They know a book that will keep you awake when they see one. Nicolas Payne is a young man who refuses to be, unlike D. H. Lawrence, "at one" with things. He fights against

life's Waring Blender, and lives constantly under its "awful shadow." Payne is a young man with awful problems and when Ann, his girlfriend, tells him, "It's all in your head," it's the kind of information that he knows can't help anyone. Payne sometimes goes around "for no reason" on crutches. He sometimes hears nonexistent dogs, he never knows their number. He would like to become a legend. He carries a pistol for warmth and believes in "horses that will not allow themselves to be ridden," terror, fraud and God who's smart as a whip. He reviews his options every day and when he longs for the life inside the Waring Blender, and he does sometimes, he does not carry a pistol, and tries not to limp. What he wants out of life is something as impressive as fun. He has a lot in common with some of the characters of Wright Morris, some of the characters common in America. Nathaniel Hawthorne in *Fanshawe* could also have been describing Payne when he wrote: "If his inmost heart could have been laid open, there would have been discovered that dream of undying fame; which, dream as it is, is more powerful than a thousand realities." Among his realities are Ann, who, like that wonderful English rock group "The Kinks" is obsessed with photographing everyone and everything as proof of having been there, Ann's mother who owns a refrigerated, fireproof wig bank, and the "unimaginable" C. J. Clovis who erects bat towers to repel mosquitoes so that all over America people can sit outside, on warm summer evenings, and shell their peas in peace. *The Bushwhacked Piano* is gorgeously written, sad and terribly funny, and says a lot about love and violence in America in this, the so-called Twentieth Century.

E. L. Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel* is a brilliant achievement and the best contemporary novel I've read since reading Frederick Exley's *A Fan's Notes*. (Which is remaindered all over New York.) Mr. Doctorow's book is about the son and daughter of Paul and Rochelle Isaacson, a couple who died in the electric chair not for committing espionage, but for conspiring to commit espionage. If Julius and Ethel Rosenberg had never existed, the book would be just as good as it is, but we would, of course, not then have been in such awe of the way Mr. Doctorow has managed to handle historical figures fictively and a controversial trial that is still fresh in many people's minds even today, or perhaps, especially today. *The Book of Daniel* is a book about children of trials, trials that mostly do not take place in palaces of justice. It is a book about crisis and because of that, it is a book of infinite detail and tender attention to the edges of life as well as to its dead center.

Daniel Isaacson, the son of the dead couple, tries to construct his future from the grim and confusing pieces of heritage that his parents

walked out on him and left him with. The father who taught his son to be a "psychic alien," the mother who had "a profound distaste for the common man" and who proved to her son that she was "unstable" because she refused to have illusions.

Daniel, his sister Susan, Linda, the daughter of the friend who informed on the Isaacsons, Mr. and Mrs. Lewin, the people who adopted the orphans and who are repayed by Daniel and Susan by "treating them as poorly as children treat their real parents," all are original and heartbreaking as they live lives that accommodate an event that none of them was responsible for. As, of course, everybody does, from family war stories to war war stories, some accommodating better and some worse than others and some, like Susan, not accommodating at all.

The Isaacsons' death sentence was itself used as an investigative procedure, but since they would not confess or name names, Daniel must years later, locked into family truths, try to find out what really happened and what his parents really meant by dying that way before he can begin to live his corrupted life. This book is a search that shows us richly many varieties of radical thought from the thirties until the time the book takes place (1967). It makes it seem easier to be a radical today and as Daniel says after a peace vigil in the Capitol, "Washington was our town, I played Washington when I was a kid."

At one point Daniel says, "And all my life I have been trying to escape from my relatives and I have been intricate in my run, but one way or another they are what you come upon around the corner, and the Lord God who is so frantic for recognition says you have to ask how they are and would they like something cool to drink, and what is it you can do for them this time." Take that Dr. Waters.

Jane Richmond

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FIRST REVIEWS

THE WINNING OF THE WEST

THE KID. By John Seelye. Viking. \$4.95.

OLD MORALS, SMALL CONTINENTS, DARKER TIMES. By Philip F. O'Connor. University of Iowa Press. \$5.95.

In *The Kid* John Seelye takes up the matter of the West with a surity of language and form that are both amazing. This is a yarn in the best sense, told in an unfaltering dialect as solid as Twain or Harte. The tale begins in classic Western style — “I didn’t see them ride into town but there was a man who did. . . .” The intruders are The Kid, young, blond, blue-eyed, and his huge black companion, Ham, who is mute and clairvoyant. They carry a fortune in Dakota gold and a book on the future of sheep herding in Wyoming, which The Kid reads and recites like scripture. The town is Fort Besterman, Wyoming; following the cattle-killing winter of 1886–87, it is filled with out-of-work cowboys, getting by on credit whiskey. The town’s principal citizens are the Judge, the Captain, Winky, the narrator, and Fiddler Jones, an ornery cus, a Texan with a fondness for trouble.

In fine Western fashion the collision of The Kid and Fiddler Jones is understood at the outset. Fiddler wants the gold, so does an itinerant gambler known as Leland Stanford. There is also no doubt that some violence has to come of this; that is clear in Seelye’s early compliance with the genre. Seelye brings the story to its moment of first violence with matinee movie certainty, then turns the whole town toward a chaos of rationality and plain madness the mere Western could never contain. He is at work here on the materials of classic American literature. Suddenly, all of the forced equations of so much literary criticism — Huck is . . . , Jim is . . . , Billy Budd is . . . , Claggart is . . . , Captain Vere is . . . , Ahab is . . . — begin to intersect, as though the whole critical algebra had been warped into a topological anomaly in which multiple connections occur. The Judge is the aged Huck Finn, perhaps; the Captain is something of a starry Vere, marked like Ahab; Fiddler Jones mixes Claggart and Crane’s Scratchy Wilson; The Kid, The Kid is the *here comes everybody* of American literature with Huck and Billy Budd up front.

Seelye is not alluding in all of this, he is revising. While meticulous-

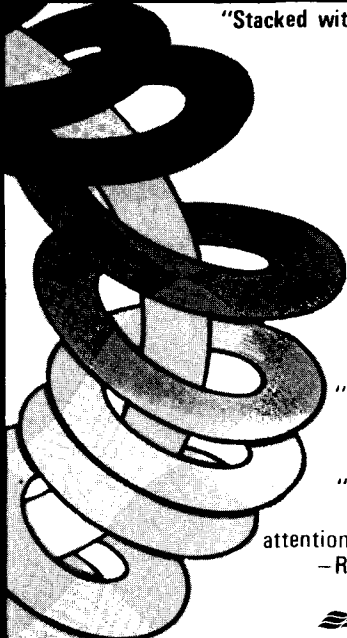
ly building the kind of Western that will resonate with dime novels and movies, he subjects its shimmering mythology to the rest of American literature and the extravagances of criticism. It is what Charles Boer has called in another context “a revisionist view” of myth. In making the Western susceptible to the whole pantheon of American literary characters, Seelye is reconsidering the assignments of roles and the arrangement of stories and themes. Fort Besterman is the place where all the thematic axioms come true, and in doing so, they are altered. The courtroom where all these paths cross offers one American conclusion — the dialectic of mercy and law synthesized by plain sense; the street outside offers another. Both speak to contemporary predicaments as much as to the rough frontier.

This is an ingenious book and an important one. It is also quite naturally funny. Winky’s narration is filled with fine story-telling exaggerations and digressions, which suit him and his dialect and which play back beautifully into the center of the book’s concerns.

Taken at all conventionally, the short story is a tangle of necessity — firm narrator, quick scene, solid characters, unfailing ironies, epiphany — and the masters of the form brood over everyone, like chess grandmasters who have plotted out a full range of problems and solutions. I raise all of this because the center of gravity of Philip F. O’Connor’s *Old Morals*, *Small Continents*, *Darker Times* is at a point of uneasiness about that form. O’Connor’s first subject, an Irish Catholic boyhood, puts him fully in the shadow of *Dubliners*, and he accommodates himself to what’s expected of his material with some skill and occasional brilliance. Still, this is familiar territory; the boy struggles between a long-suffering mother and a drunken father; in a schoolroom story he is dreamily trying to piece together his sense of a parish priest as he watches the exhaust fumes of the priest’s suicide seep out under the rectory’s garage door; in two more stories the boy begins to deal with choice and moral responsibility in a larger world. The best story in this group is “My Imaginary Father,” where the boy’s inevitable move toward his father comes in an acceptance of the father’s frustration and rage. In a brilliantly conceived exchange of secrets, the father explains his anger, his seemingly irrational hatred of The Loyal Sons and Daughters of the Golden West, a society of the heirs of California pioneers, then slides down his son’s private hill in a cardboard box — briefly childish and relieved for a night at least of the weight of his hatreds. The virus enters the boy, infecting his dreams and altering *his* hill. Only partially aware of it, he has inherited his father’s sour righteousness, a mixture of personal failure with a sense of social injustice and general error.

The less conventional stories here deal with madness or derangement and begin to allow the characters some play against the form. A number are institutionalized, and O'Connor nicely works their sense of the expectations of their keepers. They know the game — the kinds of problems that have to be exposed, withdrawn from, then slowly solved with psych-ward rhetoric. Powers in "Powers Being Himself" considers such a deception at length, and Michael in "Blather" turns the whole business to his advantage by telling his mother what the hospital Freudians wanted him to say about her. There are less playful, more deeply disturbed characters here, as well. In "The Thumping of the Grass" and "Gerald's Song" the level of dissociation in the narrators leads O'Connor's style to a lyricism that escapes the ordinary, expedient short story language that fills most of the collection. The last story is written in this manner. The character is an artist and teacher; like O'Connor's psychiatric characters he is at play with what's expected of him, but the psychiatric expectations merge with professional and artistic games. What is left is a spritely but desperate play against standard play. O'Connor is beginning to edge against the rules he's been playing by. Like the artist, Mastodon, and his canny inmates, O'Connor is mired in expectations he's beginning to think about not fulfilling.

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CONTEMPORARY NONSENSE

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Paul VI had kind words yesterday for hairdressers who, he said, were in a position to render service by reason of the “patience, kindness and courtesy,” required by their profession.

The Pope made his remarks to 2,000 hairdressers meeting in Rome on the 10th anniversary of the canonization of their patron saint, Peruvian mulatto friar St. Martin de Porres.

The Pope told them they have “abundant opportunities to help many people recognize the goodness of God.”

(*The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, July 4, 1972.) Contributed by Charles Douglas, Rochester, N.Y.

Studies of imprinting in the laboratory have shown that the more effort a duckling has to expend in following the imprinting object, the more strongly it prefers that object in later testing. At first it would seem that this is not the case in natural imprinting; young ducklings raised by their mother have little difficulty following her during the exodus from the nest. Closer observation of many nests over several seasons showed, however, that ducklings make a considerable effort to be near their parent. They may suffer for such efforts, since they can be accidentally stepped on, squeezed or scratched by the female adult. The combination of effort and punishment may actually strengthen imprinting. Work in my laboratory showed that chicks given an electric shock while they were following the imprinting object later showed stronger attachment to the object than unshocked chicks did. It is reasonable to expect similar results with ducklings.

(*Scientific American*, August, 1972.)

CAPE TOWN, South Africa — British playwright Donald Howarth is to produce Shakespeare’s “Othello” here later this month without Othello the moor because he has been told he cannot put a black man in an otherwise all-white cast.

Despite reconstructing the play without the original main character, Howarth said his version does not differ drastically from Shakespeare’s original play.

He has brought in three new players to fill the gap left by Othello, and said he tried to make the action more suitable to modern times.

(*San Francisco Chronicle*, June 19, 1972.) Contributed by John Benson, Carmel, California.

EDITOR’S NOTE: We’d like to remind our readers that they are invited to send in examples of nonsense. A free subscription to *PR* will be awarded for each contribution used. In case of a tie, single copies will be awarded to latecomers.

LETTERS

"BLACK IS BLACK, WHITE IS WHITE"

Sirs:

Since reading his "The Black Aesthetic In White America" (*PR*, Winter, 1971-72), I have been wondering why Morris Dickstein wrote such an erroneous, pompous, and nationalistic document (especially, nationalistic, when he sees my influences as The Marx Brothers, Surrealism [Tzara], or another black writer's as Philip Roth, and when he views Norman Mailer as the "presiding genius," of a particular type of black essay); when he terms my work "incoherent," he is saying that the way he interprets the world is the best, the kind of high-class bigoted stance responsible for Judaic-Christianity's current difficulties.

That long speech which preceded Mr. Dickstein's "criticism" reminded me of the ones Sam Rayburn used to make at the Democratic conventions: humorless, demagogic, corny, and prejudiced.

I have read Mr. Dickstein's article again and decided that his grievances concerning something called, "The Black Aesthetic . . ." have more to do with a long-standing quarrel between Jezebel and the patriarchs than those questions arising from a writing Dickstein, superficially, traces to Richard Wright.

Mr. Dickstein is imploring Jezebel to reform and calling it "criticism."

What I can't understand is why he heaps his pet peeves and bad scholarship — to anyone who knows the field — upon us. Why not simply take out a personal ad

in *The New York Post*: "Jezebel Come Home — Daddy."

As shoddy as Mr. Dickstein's escapade was it does have its meaningful side. It reminded me of some notes on the back cover of Dover's *Egyptian Magic* by E. A. Wallis Budge which say, "Even their most severe critics, the Hebrews, admitted the power of Egyptian Magic."

I wonder were our ancient critics as inept as our contemporary ones.

Finally, Mr. Dickstein wrote, "Baldwin's hostility to Bigger, his horror at the violent street nigger, causes him unconsciously to take over the white man's perspective, to project the same sexual fantasies that he debunks so brilliantly when they are applied to himself"; this said, apparently, because of Mr. Dickstein's belief that Baldwin erred in accusing Bigger Thomas of rape.

James Baldwin is right and Dickstein is wrong. Bigger rapes Bessie, his girlfriend, on page 217, Book Two, of *Native Son*, The Modern Library edition.

What does Mr. Dickstein's error say about his . . . er . . . unconscious?

Ishmael Reed, Berkeley, California

Mr. Dickstein replies:

Mr. Reed's one substantive point first: Bigger does indeed force himself on Bessie, but she is his own girlfriend, she has run off with him, and she does not wholly resist him. Whether this can be called rape is dubious; in the novel itself Wright chooses not to. Instead he describes something more subtly moving and painful. ("He heard her sigh, a sigh he knew, for he had heard it many times before: but this time he heard in it a sigh

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deep down beneath the familiar one, a sigh of resignation, a giving up, a surrender of something more than her body.") In any case this can hardly be the incident Baldwin is referring to when he says of Bigger that "his fear drives him to murder and his hatred to rape." Bigger feels no hatred for Bessie: on the contrary, he's described as "feeling acutely sorry for her" as he takes her. In his urge to indict Bigger Baldwin has either distorted the Bessie incident or wildly misremembered the Mary Dalton episode, where Wright does repeatedly use the word rape, but only to characterize (1) the white world's sexual fantasies about Bigger; and (2) Bigger's daily condition, poisoned by hatred and described metaphorically as a continuous process of rape (Signet edition, pp. 213-14). That Baldwin turns this into a literal rape, and that Mr. Reed defends Baldwin's Bigger against Wright's, is of no small significance.

Mr. Reed's letter does unwittingly raise a larger issue, for despite its geniality it's a pure specimen of the sort of racist thinking that black writers have been indulging in so freely of late. This is evident in the way he garbles and dismisses any suggestion of mutual influence (or even analogy) between contemporary black and white writing, and in the way he feels free to ignore most of my specific points by attributing everything in the essay to my all-important Jewishness. My own subject was a body of literature that had been written by blacks, as blacks, but also as different persons of different generations; his letter is about putative Hebrew racial traits, among which he seems to number criticism, moral serious-

ness, and consecutive thought. Mr. Reed does himself and other blacks a disservice by yielding up these virtues so readily and coming on all cool and hip and liberated. Considering how often black people have been victimized by racial stereotypes it's astonishing to see them playing the same game. My essay argued that black writing should be taken more seriously, more personally, by white critics and readers. Mr. Reed, positively offended by this attention, seems to insist that it be taken less seriously. Like Jezebel, he seems determined to come to a bad end.

FOR THE RECORD

Sirs:

I hesitated whether to add my name to those protesting against the Ford Foundation's allocation of a considerable sum of money to *Encounter*, since the statement seemed couched in terms applicable exclusively to American editors and publishers.

However, recently I read in the *New York Herald Tribune* (15 September 1972) an article which took the form of an interview by their correspondent Mr. Irving Mander with Mr. Melvin Lasky. The article was entitled, perhaps ironically, *Encounter—a cultural bridge*. Mr. Mander reports Mr. Lasky as saying that at the time of the revelations about the CIA subvention of *Encounter*, "in effect Spender wished to kill the magazine." The *Herald Tribune* did not publish a letter from me repudiating this grotesque misstatement—only comprehensible if you identify *Encounter* with Melvin Lasky—so I welcome the opportunity of signing your statement as an occasion for making my position clear. At the time of the revelations of the CIA support of *Encounter* I

thought that all editors should resign so that the trustees could make their independent decision as to the future of the magazine. Instead of this, Mr. Lasky—the American editor who had not confided in his colleagues as to the origins of the American support—did not resign, the trustees dissolved themselves and Mr. Kermode and I resigned, being unwilling to work further with Mr. Lasky. Soon after this Mr. Nigel Dennis became coeditor with Mr. Lasky but himself resigned two years later in strong disagreement with his coeditor, as he made clear in a short letter—a masterpiece of sarcasm—which was published in the London *Times*.

What seems astonishing and, indeed, "nearly scandalous" to me is not so much that the Ford Foundation should support an English magazine as that they should "in effect" (as Mr. Lasky would doubtless put it) support an American editor who has alienated three English colleagues without their ever having addressed any inquiry to these three men—who are not unknown in English life—or seemingly to have inquired into the circumstances of *Encounter*. It is rather as if I were to edit a magazine in New York supported by English funds, behave to my American colleagues in such a way that three of them refused to have further dealings with me, and that after this I should continue to receive subventions from English sources, without my English sponsors ever bothering to inquire into the circumstances. It seems to me that I am bound to join your protest though my grounds of protest are different from those of the other signatories. I will be grateful if you will publish this elucidation.

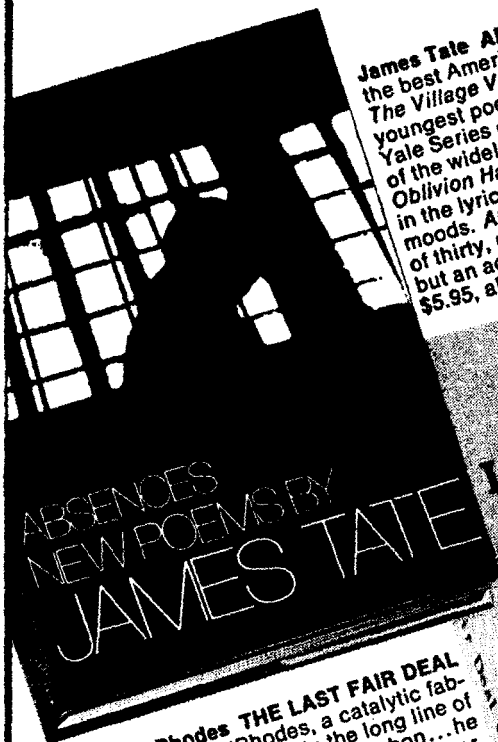
Stephen Spender, London

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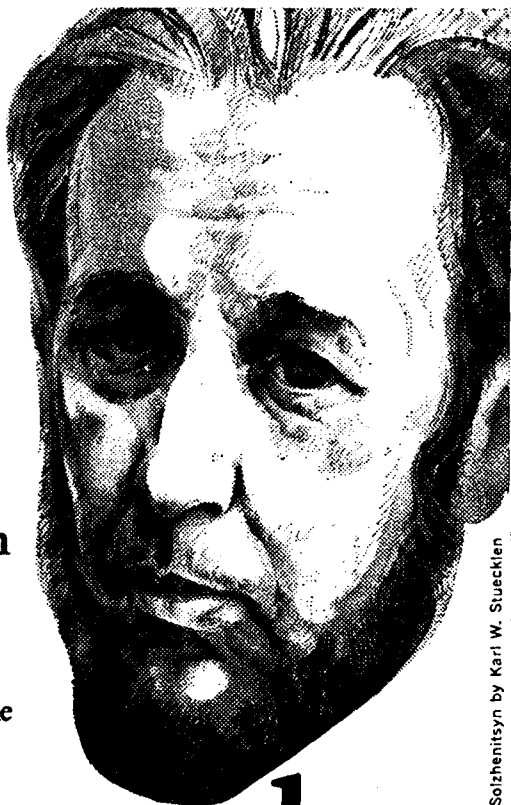
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